THE TRUTH ABOUT YOUR "BARGAIN" INSURANCE
THE NOT-ME GENERATION

The Washington Monthly

FEBRUARY 1980/$2.00

All the Media's Magic and all the Media's Men can't put Jesse Jackson Together

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Controls.

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The wrong medicine for the wrong patient.

The only thing we learn from history is that we do not learn from history.

The frustration of Americans, as they watch their dollars shrink, is demonstrated by public opinion polls which show that a majority favor wage and price controls to halt inflation. How quickly we forget!

Wage and price controls will *not* stop inflation. Responsible government fiscal policy is the only way to do that. Wage and price controls have been a failure every time they have been tried—going back to attempts by Egypt to regulate grain prices in 2800 B.C! The Roman Emperors failed at it, and price controls nearly starved Washington's troops at Valley Forge. Even a Nazi dictatorship could not make controls work during World War II.*

But it is not necessary to be a student of history to know that wage and price controls do not work. Prior to August 1971 when President Nixon imposed controls, consumer prices were rising at a rate of 4.3 percent. The year after controls were removed, the artificially imposed pressure forced the rate to 9.1 percent.

Wage and price controls are the wrong medicine for the wrong patient. The disease that must be cured is irresponsible deficit spending by politicians in Washington which inflates the money supply and cheapens our dollars to pay for their spending binges. Imposing wage and price controls will not solve the problem; it will only serve to further distort the economy and, in the long run, lead to more years of double-digit inflation.

So when government asks you to step up and take your wage-and-price-control medicine—look on it as another "cure-all" with harmful side effects.

Amway Corporation, Ada, MI. 49355. **Amway**

*Source, *Policy Review*, Summer 1978.

One of a series of messages to stimulate public dialogue about significant national issues.

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Letters

Cold, Dead Feet

As an Angeleno in love with my small, efficient Toyota, I especially enjoyed Robert Kaus' article ["Confessions of a Car Lover," December 1979]. I do have one disagreement, however. Going through the intersection he described is not nearly as fun as going *over* it on the transition road to the San Diego Freeway South. Poo on the notion that it is the most beautiful spot in Los Angeles, however.

WALLIS PEREIRA
Redondo Beach, Calif.

Social Security

In "Tilting at Windmills" [December, 1979] Charles Peters stated that "if there is one reasonable step that most of us can agree on that has a realistic chance of passing Congress in the near future, it is the rollback of social security taxes. This would fight both inflation and recession. . . "

I assume that the "us" Mr. Peters refers to are affluent associates who do not have to rely on social security as their only source of income.

STEVE CORRELL
Bordentown, N.J.

The editor replies:

Lowering the social security payroll tax would not endanger benefits for the time being. In the long run, we believe the benefits should be financed by income taxes rather than from the regressive payroll tax. And in the long run, also, we think benefits should be substantially increased for the poor and eliminated for those who have substantial other income.

Pillars Posting

You took a swipe at life insurance agents [Tilting at Windmills, December 1979] that requires a response. A Chartered (not Certified) Life Underwriter is a person who has successfully completed a 3 to 5 year special course of study. The course includes 10 separate examinations in such areas as accounting and finance, economics, pensions, trusts and estates, social security, insurance law and mathematics, Federal income tax statutes, and so on. Of the approximately 300,000 life insurance agents, only 26,000 have been granted the CLU designation.

STUART J. BRAHS
Washington, D.C.

Mr. Brahs is Federal Legislative Director for the American Council of Life Insurance.

You state that "life insurance, like law and medicine, is a decentralized racket." Do you really believe that the two greatest professions, law and medicine, are rackets?

WALTER C. HOUCK, CLU
Baltimore, Maryland

The editor replies:

The power of the legal and medical professions to protect themselves from the consequences of their sins is, like that of the insurance industry, dependent on the decentralized political power of hundreds of thousands of practitioners, most of whom are pillars of their communities and many of whom are substantial contributors to political campaigns. We do not mean to deny that some lawyers, doctors, and life insurance underwriters are skilled at their professions and dedicated to the welfare of their clients.

Lessard on Kennedy

Hurrah for *The Washington Monthly's* willingness to print Suzannah Lessard's "Kennedy's Woman Problem—Women's Kennedy Problem" [December, 1979]. As a reader of both *The Washington Monthly* and *The New Republic*, I feel the latter magazine should hang its collective head in shame for *not* printing it. Ted is no Jack or

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Published monthly except combined July/August issue by The Washington Monthly Company, 1611 Connecticut Ave., NW, Washington, D.C. 20009, (202) 659-4866. Editorial office: 1525 18th St., NW, Washington, D.C. 20036, (202) 462-0128.

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ISSN: No. 0043-0633.

Subscription rates: U.S. and possessions $20, one year; $33, two years; $45, three years. Foreign, including Canada, $2 per year additional, surface; air mail rates available on request. Back issues, $2. Send all remittances and correspondence concerning subscriptions, undelivered copies and changes of address to 1611 Connecticut Ave., NW, Washington, D.C. 20009. For changes of address please provide six weeks advance notice and return old address label.

The Washington Monthly is indexed in the Book Review Index, the Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature, Public Affairs Information Service, the Social Science Index and Ulrich's International Periodicals directory, and may be obtained on microfilm from University Microfilms International, Ann Arbor, MI, 48106.

Unsolicited manuscripts must be accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

Second class postage paid at Washington, D.C. and additional offices.

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Letters

Bobby. His philandering "style," as Ms. Lessard's piece points out, betrays an immaturity and "sexist" attitude toward women that is insulting. I'm glad you had the guts to break through the "old boy network" and print it.

NANCY L. SNIDER
Santa Barbara, Calif.

Suzannah Lessard is to be congratulated. As someone active in the women's movement, I have long heard the questions she raises. It's not unreasonable to wonder how seriously Kennedy will treat the issues of day care and economic discrimination against women if the women in his private life are treated as shabbily as Lessard suggests.

BARBARA BERMAN
Washington, D.C.

Thanks for printing the article that *The New Republic* refused to publish. We now know *The New Republic* was right. One would have hoped that even a feckless feminist tract would have at least a dalliance with fundamental journalistic principles. Facts, for instance.

AARON EPSTEIN
Washington, D.C.

Mr. Epstein is on the Washington bureau of Knight-Ridder newspapers.

Ms. Lessard writes with an urbanity the old yellow journalism never knew. But a smear is a smear. *The New Republic* apparently knew that.

LESLIE W. DUNBAR
Pelham, New York

If Lessard has any specific proof, she and *The Washington Monthly* have a responsibility to provide names, dates, and places. Otherwise her notion of equal rights is that men can be libeled freely, but women should be protected through anonymity.

JOEL MARGOLIS
Albany, New York

Suzannah Lessard's article is atrocious. It's just a cut above gossip—the kind you hear over drinks in a Washington watering hole. But it's not good enough to make it into a real gossip magazine because they know their readers want evidence.

MORRIS A. SHEPPARD
Boston, Massachusetts

Why is there not one name of a woman who slept with Kennedy? Lessard probably heard that it happens so often that she—and you—believed it. Shame on you both.

TERENCE KENNEDY
Gardena, Calif.

I have never been so disgusted. . .

MARY DAVIS
Valencia, Calif.

. . . hogwash.

JOAN MEANS
Georgetown, Massachusetts

The editor replies:

We would not have printed Suzannah Lessard's article if we doubted its truth. This is the rule we use to govern what we publish—not a "two source" rule (although we had more than two sources for the crucial facts in this article) but a rule that says we should print what we know to be true and believe is important. We stand behind the Lessard story without reservation.

In this instance, we did not name or quote our sources because 1) most of them are dependent, in one way or another, on the good will of the Kennedy family; and 2) the story is about Kennedy and his flaws, not about either the women involved or others who know of Kennedy's philandering. Why embarrass them, or cause them other unnecessary torment, by publicizing "names, dates, and places?"

Since the article appeared, we have received strong criticism, from friends of ours who are close to Kennedy, questioning our judgment in running the piece. In each case, we asked them whether our story was accurate. In each case the reluctant answer was the same: yes.

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Tilting at windmills

by Charles Peters

Suppose you are a magazine publisher and want to advance the career of the politician of your choice, but you neither want to compromise your editorial pages with the appearance of favoritism nor risk prosecution under the campaign financing laws. There is a way to solve this dilemma, and those of us who live in Washington saw it used last month by *Time*, which got local advertisers to finance a 20-page supplement paying tribute to Mayor Marion Barry. The tribute, entitled "Can A City Take a Stand?", was in an advertising section, so the taint of editorial favoritism was avoided. The fawning profiles were paid for by the advertisers, not by *Time*, so the magazine was immune to the laws limiting campaign contributions.

This supplement represented a refinement of a technique developed by *Time* when it was led by Hedley Donovan. In 1976, while Donovan was supporting Jimmy Carter (in whose White House he now works), *Time* ran a series of ads in its own behalf. The point of the ads was that interesting people read *Time*. The interesting person featured happened to be Jimmy Carter, sitting in a rocking chair on the front porch of a small-town house, looking exactly as his campaign managers wanted him to look. Coming in a campaign year, however, the 1976 ad ran the risk of being labeled a campaign contribution.

Scientific American may have avoided that pitfall by helping a politician in a non-election year. Its ad, with a pitch similar to *Time*'s about Carter, ran during 1979. Its subject was Representative Les Aspin, who ranks second only to Senator William Proxmire in his ability to inspire column inches of attention. Eight color photographs showing Aspin's active, concerned, and statesmanlike qualities in all their rich variety are spread over two pages. The copy begins:

"Les Aspin, Congressman from Wisconsin, is an outspoken advocate and authority on two of the most critical issues facing America today: inflation and SALT II.

"He has the academic credentials of a professional economist: A B.A., summa cum laude from Yale; a Rhodes scholar; a Ph.D. from MIT; was economic advisor to the Secretary of Defense; and, for two years, an Assistant Professor of Economics at Marquette University.

"A key member of the Government Operations Committee, Aspin takes a hard line against inflationary waste and extravagance."

Imagine how you would feel about this if you were Aspin's next opponent. . . .

◆

One of the men's shoe companies, Allen Edmonds, is offering a Genuine Wildebeest Shoe. If they used the animal's other name, they could call it the Gnu Shoe. . .

◆

Pretend you are a governor. The time, last summer. You urge the people of your state to conserve gasoline. They believe in you. They conserve. What is their

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reward, and what will be yours when they find out that the Department of Energy has based this year's gasoline allocations on last year's consumption?...

During the 1976 campaign did you get the impression that Carter would streamline the bureaucracy and reduce the number of governmental employees? Well, right now, according to Mike Causey, *The Washington Post's* expert on the civil service, there are more people working for the federal government in the Washington area than at any time in the nation's history. The present total is 370,964, and it does not include employees of the CIA and the National Security Agency, which knowledgeable observers say would put the figure well over 400,000. At the peak of World War II, by contrast, the grand total was 270,000....

Last month I read in *The Washington Post* that the General Services Administration had paid over $500,000 for office space in New York that has remained vacant since it was leased two years ago. An isolated incident, I thought. Then I picked up the latest issue of my hometown paper, *The Charleston Gazette.* On the front page was a story that the government spent $76,000 for office space in Charleston that had not been used for 16 months. Another West Virginia paper, the *Huntington Herald Dispatch,* has revealed that the GSA has paid $150,000 to rent a building it is not using there. Why are government employees so indifferent to waste? Because they have no incentive to save. There is a federal incentives awards program, but 90 per cent of its awards are for things like "skillful reorganizations" that have nothing to do with saving money...

Soon after Howard Jarvis started the Proposition 13 movement in California, this magazine published an article called "The Fireman First Principle," which warned that the clever bureaucrat's response to such budget-cutting efforts is to threaten to fire essential employees while protecting the unessential ones. This is because the bureaucrat knows he is much more likely to get his budget restored if that seems necessary to bring back employees who perform vital functions. Here is a headline that appeared in *The Los Angeles Times* a few weeks ago:

Jarvis Pushing New Initiative to Restore Pre-Prop 13 Fire, Police Funding Levels

The promotional materials of a magazine called *Self* blatantly appeal to the worst side of the "me" generation. The result, according to *The New York Times:* "Probably the most successful magazine start in the last couple of years is Conde Nast's *Self.*"...

A California court has held a novelist liable for defaming a psychiatrist who had claimed that the portrayal of a character modeled on him was libelous. Publishers are upset. "I think it's one of the most destructive and wrong-headed decisions that any court has made in the area of First Amendment rights," says Townsend Hoopes, who is president of the publishers' association. My own view is that the authors of the increasingly common roman a clef have become increasingly indifferent to the harm they do when they exaggerate the defects of—or just plain lie about—real people. For example, I have never belonged among the admirers of Jacqueline Onassis—indeed, when I worked in the Kennedy campaign in West Virginia in 1960, I unsuccessfully tried to keep her out of the state because she seemed so phony compared to Muriel Humphrey—but she has my total sympathy for what she has endured at the hands of novelists. And the alumni of the Nixon-Ford administration seem to have specialized in poisonous portrayals of their former colleagues in the roman a clef suspense

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stories that have provided their principal occupation since their removal from office or release from incarceration. Now they will have a new source of income: libel suits against each other. . . .

Montreal has done what every city should do. It has reduced subway and bus fares in order to lure its people out of their cars. American cities should do the same, and part of their federal subsidies should be specifically earmarked for that purpose. Too much federal funding of cities and states goes to financing the explosive growth of their bureaucracies and is not tied to the delivery of needed service to the public. A good place to start correcting this problem would be to make part of the federal subsidy to cities dependent on at least a trial reduction in local transit fares. . . .

A recent report from Sacramento by Lou Cannon of *The Washington Post* began, "Gov. Edmund G. (Jerry) Brown, Jr. has been absent from this state capital for 96 of the past 100 days and the prevailing view here is that state government is running fine without him." If that suggests that a state government can run without a leader, there is also impressive evidence that the federal government can run without subordinates. During the last two weeks of the year more than half the federal employees in Washington were away from their desks. The only difference in service noted by the local press was described in a story in *The Washington Star*, which alleged that, because of excessive leave-taking, there were only 11 controllers monitoring air traffic in the vast area stretching from the Carolinas to Pennsylvania when there should have been a minimum of 18. Does this mean that not only are most federal

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☐ In April — **ELECTIONS '80**, a 180-page election handbook packed with all the facts and figures you'll ever need in covering the presidential, congressional and gubernatorial races. The appendix includes the 1976 returns for all offices broken down by congressional district. Available for $6.95 per copy.

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☐ In October — **Final Outlook Special Report** for all 435 House races, 34 Senate contests and 13 gubernatorial elections. We'll also give you outlooks on the presidential race in each of the 50 states. Sent free to CQ subscribers; $15 to non-subscribers.

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employees not needed, but even those who are needed either don't realize it or don't care?...

In this issue, Walter Shapiro says that conferences and conventions have become the number one growth industry of America today. Our favorite convention has to be the Notary Publics'. To appreciate its full attraction, you should realize that all the professional knowledge required of a notary can be communicated in somewhere between 15 and 30 minutes. Here is an excerpt from the conference brochure, headlined "The Notary Public in the 1980s":

"Come join us for the 2nd Annual National Notary Association Conference & Excursion—May 15-23, 1980—whose backdrop will be exciting Miami Beach and the beautiful rum-and-sun-soaked Bahamas.

"Miami Beach also provides a unique opportunity to broaden your notarial and legal horizons... sharpen your professional skills... expose yourself to the newest procedures and practices of notarization... meet the National Notary Association's innovative executives and notarial experts... explore the technological advances that are rapidly changing the Notary profession... and have the time of your life doing it all...

"U.S. Treasury regulation #1162.5 permits an income tax deduction for education expenses (registration fees and cost of travel, meals, and lodging) undertaken to: (1) maintain or improve skills required in one's employment or other trade or business, or (2) meet express requirements of an employer or a law imposed as a condition to retention of employment, job status, or rate of compensation.

"Every delegate to the Conference will receive a National Notary Association Certificate of Attendance signifying completion of all Notary workshops and other Conference activities."

What some people call "service journalism" was once the exclusive province of women's magazines. By now, even the most highbrow publications are filled with useful information on how to keep your lifestyle on track. *Esquire*, which once devoted its pages to crashing bores like Hemingway and Mencken, took the "service" sensibility to a new plateau last month when it followed a six-page feature article on razor blades with a 1,000-word piece entitled "My Shaving Secrets." There are, it revealed, five rules for shaving, one of which is "Don't cut yourself." Another is to shave before showering so you needn't "submit to the boredom of wetting your face all over again."

If magazine readers need this sort of advice, why not voters? Rep. Gillis Long of Louisiana has answered that question. A recent edition of his constituent newsletter tackles the issue of how to "help remove those tough stains without damaging your clothes and furniture," urging voters to be prepared—because "nobody ever plans to spill anything."...

During the last half of the seventies Jack Anderson often appeared to be a mere shadow of his old muckraking self. Recently, however, he has struck gold in the form of government documents that show Henry Kissinger to have been the leading American villain in the OPEC price rise of 1973-74. The Saudis offered to oppose the rise, but Kissinger sided with his friend, the Shah, who was its leading advocate. Of the many errors Kissinger made during the Nixon and Ford administrations, this was surely the most disastrous. Kissinger thought a stable Middle East would be the result of the oil-enriched Shah's ability to buy arms. But "unstable" would have to be the mildest description of that area today—and of course the rest of the world, and the United States in particular, is still reeling from the succession of OPEC price rises that the Shah began. Why does only Anderson write this story? Why does the rest of the press continue to treat Kissinger with respect?

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HOW TO SAVE YOUR LIFE AND THE ONE NEXT TO YOU

OVERCOMING YOUR PSYCHOLOGICAL RESISTANCE TO SEAT BELTS MAY BE THE KEY.

The facts are startling. Experts estimate that about half of all automobile occupant fatalities last year might have been avoided if the people had been wearing seat belts. That's because injuries occur when the car stops abruptly and the occupants are thrown against the car's interior. Belts prevent this.

Many people say they know the facts, but they still don't wear belts. Their reasons range all over the lot: seat belts are troublesome to put on, they are uncomfortable, or they wrinkle your clothes. Some people even think getting hurt or killed in a car accident is a question of fate; and therefore, seat belts don't matter.

If you're one of those people who don't use belts for one reason or another, please think carefully about your motivations. Are your objections to seat belts based on the facts or on rationalizations?

Here are a few of the common rationalizations. Many people say they are afraid of being trapped in a car by a seat belt. In fact, in the vast majority of cases, seat belts protect passengers from severe injuries, allowing them to escape more quickly. Another popular rationalization: you'll be saved by being thrown clear of the car. Here again, research has proved that to be untrue—you are almost always safer inside the car.

Some people use seat belts for highway driving, but rationalize it's not worth the trouble to buckle up for short trips. The numbers tell a different story: 80% of all automobile accidents causing injury or death involve cars traveling under 40 miles per hour. And three quarters of all collisions happen less than 25 miles from the driver's home.

When you're the driver, you have the psychological authority to convince all of the passengers that they should wear seat belts. It has been shown that in a car, the driver is considered to be an authority figure. A simple reminder from you may help save someone's life. And please remember children can be severely injured in automobile accidents, too. Make sure Child Restraint Systems are used for children who aren't old enough to use regular seat belts.

Because so many people still don't use their seat belts, the government has directed that some form of passive restraint—one that doesn't require any action by the occupant—be built into every car by the 1984 model year. GM is offering one such restraint—a new type of automatic belt—as an option on the 1980 Chevette to gain insight into its public acceptance.

By the 1982 model year, we must begin putting passive restraints in all full-size cars and, eventually, into the entire fleet. But until you purchase one of these cars of the future, you can protect yourself and others by using seat belts and urging your family and friends to follow your example.

At GM, we're very concerned about safety. So please fasten your seat belt, because even the best driver in the world can't predict what another driver will do.

This advertisement is part of our continuing effort to give customers useful information about their cars and trucks and the company that builds them.

General Motors

People building transportation to serve people

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GUILT BY ASSOCIATION

Suddenly everyone from trade associations to department stores wants to sell you "bargain" mail-order insurance. They're bargains, all right—but not for you. Here's how the deals work.

by Bonnie Goldstein

If you belong to a trade or professional association, check your mailbox carefully this year. Chances are it's filling up with offers of inexpensive group insurance plans—offers pumped out with computerized gusto to you and the millions of other Americans who belong to these associations. The insurance plans often sound too good to be true. That's because they *are* too good to be true.

Although the price of group insurance is low, and the promise of "guaranteed acceptability" is appealing, the real deal on group insurance goes not to the buyer but to the association that sponsors it. The basic formula is simple: the association charges its members a bit more than the coverage really requires, and then, when the underwriting insurance company comes up with a refund, the association—not the members—pockets the difference.

Deep in the fine print you may be able to find cryptic descriptions of this exercise. But even lawyers—the inventors of fine print—play the group insurance game, and lose. Last year, for example, a Minneapolis lawyer who belongs to the American Bar Association paid $240 for group life insurance offered to him as a "service" by an ABA affiliate. The underwriter, New York Life, eventually refunded nearly $100 of his money. But he never saw it. The money ended up as a "charitable contribution" to something called the American Bar Endowment, where it appears to have been largely consumed by administrative expenses.

As you contemplate the way this game is played, you will come across one of the apparent contradictions of Washington. If you've spent much time downtown, you've

Bonnie Goldstein is a freelance reporter and research director for the Washington Center for the Study of Services.

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observed the glittering new buildings being erected pell-mell, one after another, by associations you've never heard of. You've probably been irradiated by the affluence of association executives riding in elevators with you; you've noticed them swarming like lemmings to Le Bagatelle at lunchtime, and usually "out of the office" starting about noon every Friday. But you also know that most associations don't charge their members much to belong. How, then, can they get the money to cut such a wide swath through Washington? By selling *insurance*?

Indeed.

Associations wouldn't be so excited about selling cheap group insurance unless there were something in it for them. Using an apparently legal but highly questionable combination of whitewashed information, mumbojumbo fine print, and melodramatic marketing, many of them have taken the old concept of a reasonable profit margin and wrenched it beyond recognition, to the point where they are pocketing millions of dollars a year in premium refunds that could—and should—be returned directly to their members. Consider:

- Since no law requires associations to disclose how much they take in as refunds, an estimate of the total involved is hard to come by. The American Bar Association, not normally a tight-lipped group, had no interest in enlightening *The Washington Monthly* about its group insurance surplus. "Anything that's being published," an ABA representative told me, "would have to be approved by any number of individuals—maybe even the board of directors." It took a fusillade of phone calls to blast loose the simple fact that ABA received $5.4 million in refunds in 1978 alone. That same year, the American Institute for Certified Public Accountants (AICPA), one of the few associations that returns refunds directly to its members, distributed $13.5 million. Figures like these suggest the total refunds to the thousands of associations in America could amount to hundreds of millions of dollars a year—money their members never see.
- Association insurance "policies" are not really policies at all—not in the usual sense of the word. What members get is a "certificate of insurance." But it's the association alone that holds the policy. If the association folds (as 2,000 did during the past five years), the "insurance" vanishes without warning or recall.
- Associations further inflate the cost of group policies by pyramiding "fees" and "commissions"—sometimes for nothing more than the use of the association's logo.
- Some of the country's most prestigious associations use group insurance plans in perfectly ethical ways, taking pains to inform members about what happens to the refunds. B'nai B'rith, for example, openly promotes the use of refunds as a way for members to support the organization. Along with AICPA, the National Automobile Dealers Association (NADA) returns refunds to its members. But many other groups, including ABA and the American Nurses Association, shroud their insurance plans in Q-clearance secrecy.
- The new frontier for direct-mail insurance involves peddling "policies" to "groups" that may have nothing more in common than their shopping habits. Hecht's, a large Washington department store chain, offers supplemental health insurance to its credit-card holders, and readers of *Playboy* can insure their lust for life by buying plans offered to subscribers. The "policyholder" who wants questions answered about his coverage had better be ready for a long winter; Hecht's and Hefner don't administer these programs—they just act as conduits for other companies.

"Association insurance used to be a pretty rarefied field," says a spokesman for the American Council on Life Insurance, "but it's rapidly becoming big business." According to the council, about two million people currently carry $40-billion worth of group life insurance through associations. The idea is more than 30 years old—entrepreneurs like Kansas City's Forest T. Jones and Chicago's Charlie Finley made their fortunes on it—but major insurance brokers and underwriters have only recently been attracted. It's attractive because "regulations" governing association policies are as relaxed as a sunbather at St. Tropez.

"There's virtually no limit to what you can do," a leading insurance broker says. A spokesman for the Missouri Division of Insurance warns: "Technically, as policy holders, the associations can even change

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the beneficiaries on life insurance." Some associations avoid temptations this brazen by simply suggesting that you name them as beneficiaries in the first place.

Free Association

The proliferation of associations—most of them based in Washington, where they can at least appear to have access to the great gears of government—has made association insurance important business. The *Encyclopedia of Associations* lists 14,019 active organizations; 4,000 have been formed since 1975. Groups come in many packages with different purposes. Professional associations like the American Medical Association make much of their membership rules and the quasi-judicial role they play within the profession. Trade groups like the American Public Works Association draw members from general job categories; they are big on conferences, trade expositions, and publicity. Fraternal groups like the Scottish Rite of Free Masonry are basically social clubs. Organizations like the National Rifle Association devote themselves first and foremost to pressuring Congress. Miscellaneous general membership groups like the National Duck Pin Bowlers Congress are out on the frayed fringes of specialization.

Long ago, most of these organizations existed primarily for purposes of camaraderie among colleagues with similar interests. If you dropped in on a typical association headquarters in Washington a generation ago, you found a rabble of wizened industry veterans, cranking out a mimeographed newsletter on pending legislation and planning the annual banquet. In their spare time they sold cuff links and coasters emblazoned with the association's crest. The image lives on, but the reality today is very different. Association executives have recognized that their organizations are magnificent marketing machines. They have accurate mailing lists; their members are generally affluent; and the association's logo lends credibility to almost any enterprise. The American Association for Retired Persons (AARP) may sound like a collection of front-porch philosophers, but it is actually an 11-million-member catalog store selling travel packages, road service, greeting cards—and insurance.

Some forms of insurance are notoriously easy to sell and highly profitable—including life, "supplemental" health, cancer "protection," and various kinds of dismemberment coverage. Actuarial tables, which the insurance industry has been compiling and revising for more than a century, determine with great accuracy the relative risk factors for any particular individual or group: coal miners and private pilots are high-risk; mild-mannered businessmen who exercise regularly are low-risk; and a dismemberment policy that pays off only when the victim loses one foot and his tongue in a riverboat boiler explosion is, actuarially speaking, no risk at all.

Most people assume group life insurance is cheaper than individual coverage because their group constitutes a better-than-average risk. But group life discounts have little to do with the actuarial differences between the aligned and the non-aligned; a university professor is the same kind of risk whether he insures himself through the American Association of University Professors or on his own. Although AAUP's membership gives the actuaries a large data bank to help fine-tune the risk factors, the real savings come from mass-marketing. Individual policies require, at the outset, individual salesmanship, and then individual account servicing. Direct-mail promotions continue to emphasize the personal touch (see "You're In Good Hands With Betty M. Cryer" on page 18) but there is nothing personal about them, and that's precisely their attraction for insurance companies. One account executive, backed up by a computer, can cope with dozens of association policies, which, in turn, are "covering" hundreds of thousands of people.

The idea is to get as many people as you can under one policy. It doesn't much matter how. You can buy group life insurance through the Boat Owners Association, but you don't actually need to own a boat to qualify. A BOA spokesman explains that the association only requires you to pay your dues and like boats—and one of these requirements is not strictly enforced.

Mass marketing appeals to associations for the same reason it appeals to insurance

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Take a Lawyer to Dinner

Unfortunately for their officers, most associations are non-profit. The executives can't distribute, as profit, any money that might happen to be left over. So the refunds from group insurance policies must be assigned to some necessary and reasonable cost of serving the membership: like the officers' salaries, kerosene for their chartered jets, and weeping fig trees for the headquarters' atrium lobby. But these are just routine business costs. Somehow, associations have to find money for those little extras that make life worthwhile.

The Missouri Bar Association, for instance, has an annual "recognition" dinner during which its president bestows small awards on distinguished persons. It's "the kind of event we feel should not be financed out of the lawyers' dues," says Wade Baker, the association's administrative director. So the Missouri Bar "invited people who have relations with the bar to make contributions. . . like banks and insurance companies."

Luckily, there was a firm deeply concerned about the nutritional requirements of Missouri Bar members, a company called Forest T. Jones & Co. of Kansas City. Jones had already established his desire to be "a contributor," Baker said, by placing ads in the bar's journal. "We asked them two or three times to make a contribution," Baker said. "There was no pressure."

Jones—who bills himself as the country's leading broker-administrator of association group insurance—contributed $1,500 a year for several years, Baker said. "One or two times," he added, the banks must have been preoccupied with other business, because Jones was the *only* contributor. But then Jones has a legitimate reason for wanting lawyers to get healthy hot meals: his company is broker-administrator for the Missouri Bar's group insurance policies.

Jones's contributions to association dinners recently stopped, Baker said, because both parties wanted to avoid the "appearance" of impropriety. It helped that state officials had just slapped Jones with the appearance of an audit. But Jones himself sees nothing wrong in his affairs. "I'm so closely watched by state regulators, I have to be white as the driven snow," he explained. He also has no fears about an association pocketing its "experience refunds" on group life insurance policies.

Returning refunds to members is "a very unusual arrangement, in my experience," Jones noted. Jones says he will not, however, do business with any group that uses its experience refund to cover operating expenses. "The money's got to go into some kind of endowment or trust," he insists. As the American Bar Association and its clone, the American Bar Endowment, found out, placing money in an endowment can be a relatively painless sacrifice. (See main story.)

Insurance fever has one welcome side-effect—it distracts the associations from dabbling in travel agency shenanigans. Until recently, it was fairly common for association executives—weighing the credentials of various travel firms that wanted to sell through their groups—to submit themselves to the rigor of "site inspection" trips. They would fly somewhere for a week or so, at the travel agent's expense, just to make certain for themselves that Paris or Copenhagen really was a suitable spot for their annual meeting.

Baker of the Missouri Bar Association has heard of such abuses. He condemns them. "I've had free rides offered to me, and I won't accept them," he said. "I've never accepted but one, and that was purely legitimate. The president of the bar himself told me, 'Look, here's two empty seats, why don't you and your wife take this?'"

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underwriters. Associations can peddle insurance cheaply and still have lots left over from the premiums to rake off for themselves. The little-known mechanism of the rake-off—several insurance industry authorities interviewed for this article were unaware of it—is, once uncovered, disarmingly clear. It works like this:

Members buying life insurance pay their premiums to the association, receiving a "certificate of insurance" in return. The association buys a single "master policy" from an insurance underwriter, such as MONY or New York Life.

When an insured member dies, the underwriter pays benefits to his estate. But what if the underwriter decides that the association's members are paying unnecessarily high premiums? In that case, refunds are in order, and it would seem logical for them to go to the individual members who paid the premiums in the first place. But the refunds go to the *policy-holder*—the association, not its members. The association keeps the money, and since the members were never expecting to get any money back, they never miss it.

This may seem like idle theorizing. Whoever heard of an insurance company determining that somebody's premiums were too high? In fact, it happens all the time with group coverage.

The amount of the refund, if any, is determined by the group's "experience"—the track record ot its members' mortality, compared against actuarial tables. The way the insurance industry operates this system is intriguing. Although statistics have been compiled by actuaries on almost every category of human being known to the deity (firemen working the night shift, firemen working the day shift, rural firemen, urban firemen, diabetic firemen, firemen with varicose veins, firemen who like boats, on and on and on), the industry takes a cautious—and highly profitable—approach to new association accounts. For the first few years of an association master policy, there is no refund, and the underwriter makes a great fuss about watching nervously to see whether associated duck-pin bowlers are more death-prone than *un*associated ones.

Whenever the actuaries satisfy themselves that the association members fit the tables, the group passes over into the promised land of refunds. It is now said to have "favorable experience." The ever-cautious insurance company makes no retroactive refunds, of course, and it holds some of the premium money in a contingency fund—against the possibility that the bowlers might be wiped out en masse by a roof collapse while assembled in convention. (It makes part of its profit by investing the contingency fund and collecting the dividends.) With these bookkeeping details safely out of the way, the insurance company goes about the business of refunding money to the association.

The more favorable the experience (the fewer the claims), the greater the refund. Max Keeney, insurance administrator for the 130,000-member Air Force Association, explains:

"Suppose you have a thousand members, each buying a $10,000 policy at $10 a month. You would collect $120,000 in premiums every year. Assume you spend $15,000 on operating expenses and $25,000 goes into a contingency fund. Two members die, so you pay out $20,000 in benefits. Thus, your total expenses for the year come to $60,000." What happens to the other $60,000? The association gets it back, as an "experience refund."

Keeney says the AFA uses its refunds to buy more coverage—so members do get it back, after a fashion. But many associations simply put the refunds into their coffers, never advising the members in any plain-English way that the surplus exists.

Shhhhh

How much money is lost to association members this way? Given the silence that surrounds the system, there's no way to be certain. At the American Bar Association, for example, nobody's volunteering nothing about nothing.

"The director doesn't want you to have this information," said an official of the American Bar Endowment when I asked about refunds. The Endowment is the ABA affiliate that carries group life insurance and keeps the proceeds. I wanted to make a comparison between ABA's experience and the American Institute for Certified Public Accountants, which passes refunds directly to members and isn't hesitant about discussing hard numbers. In fiscal year 1979, AICPA says it

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collected $32 million in group life insurance premiums and returned $13.5 million. That means its members got back 42 cents out of every dollar they paid in. I assumed lawyers might be just as eager as accountants to recover their money.

Not all accountants, it should be said, are as well-rewarded as the members of AICPA. The 15,000-member National Society of Public Accountants was recently named in a review by Missouri insurance auditors for allegedly skimming unsub-

And If an Advancing Glacier Crushes Your Garage...

One of the time-honored strategies for insurance profit is to sell an inexpensive policy against something that almost never happens. This idea was first hit upon by W. Clement Stone, now a conservative philanthropist and author of motivational books. During the Depression, Stone sold low-priced coverage covering accidents like losing a leg while "on a train, boat, or aeroplane." In plane crashes, of course, you generally lose more—or less.

Stone also pioneered another insurance concept—mass marketing. He hired aimless but eager men to walk door-to-door flashing rolls of preprinted policies. They would present—without changing or adding a word, Stone insisted—a "proven success speech" about the policy, then sign up buyers on the spot. Through the years Stone parlayed these ideas into Combined Insurance Co., a large public company which still sells inexpensive travel insurance door-to-door—lots of good jobs for people who couldn't get a break from anyone else; and lots of policies that never have to pay a claim.

The modern manifestations of mass-marketing coupled with insurance against nothing are "cancer" and "dismemberment" insurance. The Trust for Insuring Educators, for instance, direct-mails offers of cancer insurance to the 28 associations it comprises, including the American Theatre Association, the National Association of Educational Secretaries, and the National School Public Relations Association.

The low-priced ($48 a year) policy is promoted as a "$250,000 plan." It sounds like an irresistible deal, because of the concurrence of low premiums and high benefits, and the high likelihood that any given person will get cancer. But examination shows that almost all of the "$250,000" in benefits comes from an "extended hospital stay clause." This promises to pay up to $5,000 a month, to a total of $250,000—beginning on the *91st* day of a cancer victim's hospitalization. According to the Massachusetts Insurance Department, uninterrupted hospital stays of longer than 30 days are almost unheard-of for cancer patients; such clauses pay out about $1 in benefits for every $1,000 in premiums, the agency says. By contrast, the Trust for Insuring Educators policy—provided by broker-administrator Forest T. Jones & Co. of Kansas City—pays a "maximum (total) lifetime benefit of $1,500" for x-rays, isotopes, and chemotherapy, among the most common cancer expenses.

Other group policies offer "dismemberment" guarantees. An "Accidental Death and Dismemberment" group policy sold through the State Bar of California offers to pay one quarter its principal sum for loss of "thumb and index finger of either hand." The supplemental health insurance policies sold through *Playboy*'s Playgroup and Hecht's department store pay $10,000 for "non-fatal injuries resulting in the loss of both hands, feet, or the sight in both eyes." How many of Hecht's shoppers, actuarially speaking, do you suppose lose both feet?

It all recalls Groucho Marx's routine about a high-powered insurance salesman, said to be inspired by Stone. "If you lose a leg," Groucho's salesman promised, "we'll help you look for it."

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stantiated administration "fees" from its group life funds. Lou Garcia, a spokesman at NSPA's Washington headquarters, was just as amiable and forthcoming as the American Bar Endowment; he wouldn't even confirm whether NSPA gets "experience refunds" at all.

Are there refunds, Lou?

"No comment."

How much?

"No comment."

How are they used?

"No comment."

Oh, come on, Lou, what's with all these no-comments? You're a legitimate association, aren't you?

"No comment."

Sins of Commission

Different associations handle the administration of their group plans in different ways, and here again the regulations don't help, because there aren't any. Among self-administered plans, for example, the fees associations pay themselves vary, from the approximately three per cent charged by the AICPA to the nearly ten per cent levied by B'nai B'rith.

Most associations don't administer their own plans. NSPA, for instance, uses a third-party broker who obtains and administers the policy. With this type of arrangement, an association generally pockets less—because it isn't collecting an administrative fee—but then it doesn't have to do any work, either.

Observe the insurance arrangements of the 190,000-member American Nurses Association. ANA uses Kirke Van Orsdel, Inc., a Des Moines broker, to administer its life, "supplemental" health, dental, and cancer coverage. ANA members send their premiums directly to Kirke Van Orsdel, which uses the money to buy life insurance from Prudential. Prudential takes ten per cent of the total value of the life insurance as its profit—a "reasonable" rate by industry standards.

But before the money gets to Prudential, Kirke Van Orsdel takes out a "nearly" five per cent "commission" and a ten per cent "administrative fee," according to company president Gary Kirke. It also sends ANA another five per cent "as a courtesy." That adds up to "nearly" 20 per cent. There's nothing illegal about any of this, but the fact remains that an organization like AICPA performs all of its administrative functions for three per cent, while ANA members are spending 20 per cent of their premiums just to get their money delivered to Prudential.

Why should Kirke Van Orsdel send five per cent to ANA? It compensates them, Kirke said, for "staff, time, and intangible costs." These must be intangible indeed, since ANA does none of the administrative work.

This is not the impression nurses get when they receive mailings. The insurance is not promoted to them by Kirke Van Orsdel or Prudential; it's their very own ANA that's looking out for them. They receive a 48-page "Super Services Catalog" describing the plans ANA has for them—covering everything from dental work and cancer coverage to vacations in the Caribbean. . . even the traditional earrings and cufflinks with the ANA logo. Printing and mailing the catalog is paid for by companies using it to sell to nurses; ANA simply sprinkles on its blessing.

The catalog opens with a message from Pauline S. Fergusson, ANA director of membership services. "We've come a long way!" she proclaims. She goes on to suggest it's not far enough—the conscientious nurse, in her view, should be buying life insurance. Ms. Fergusson doesn't have a license to sell insurance, but then, they don't license carnival barkers either.

At the moment, ANA is not getting an "experience refund," according to Kirke, because it has not yet established "favorable experience" with Prudential's actuaries. If a refund becomes available, he says, ANA will have the option of using it to buy more insurance or simply keeping it. He didn't mention the possibility of returning it to the nurses. Pauline Fergusson's message doesn't mention it either. Instead, she tells her members that "the group has an administrator who handles all the billing and other administrative costs—thereby saving the insurance company 'a bundle.'"

What Kirke Van Orsdel actually did was to salvage ANA as an insurance risk. Nurses, like everybody else, get older. ANA's former broker wasn't aggressively marketing its insurance package, especially to its younger members, so the median age of the policyholders was increasing steadily. Some of them were dying—well, a *lot* of them, actually. The underwriters were having to pay off. ANA's "experi-

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It costs nurses nearly 20% of their premiums just to get their money delivered to Prudential.

ence" went sour; the actuaries muttered and clicked their pencils against their teeth. Worst of all, there was serious risk that ANA would have to increase premiums—not the kind of thing calculated to endear the association to its members.

Kirke Van Orsdel to the rescue. The agency developed a slightly different plan for ANA and a full-blown marketing program. In short order, the association signed up many of its newest members—younger, less dead nurses who have improved the group's "experience" so much that the refunds are expected to be flowing again soon. This is good news to ANA's officers. It's also, of course, what successful insurance marketing is all about: maximizing the ratio between the living and the dead, and minimizing the payout.

A Premium on Secrecy

No law compels associations to reveal the extent of "experience refunds"—or even to tell their members clearly that such things exist. Most associations opt for microfiche-size type for disclosure. The 79,000-member Phi Delta Phi legal fraternity, for instance, offers this fine-print statement at the bottom of its insurance applications: "I understand that all dividends... shall become the property of Phi Delta Phi." Applicants would have to be pretty current in insurance terminology to "understand" what that means. Nowhere is the word "dividends" defined. Nowhere is there any mention of the $430,000 in refunds absorbed by Phi Delta Phi last year—a figure obtained from PBA, Inc., the association's broker-administrator. The cover letter makes only a vague allusion to a "20 per cent bonus insurance" available free "due to good experience under our Life Plan."

Phi Delta Phi officials wouldn't say what they do with the money they won't say they get. Most associations, according to an insurance consultant, simply use it for operating expenses. This provides them with a helpful competitve edge in keeping dues low. If it also goes into salaries and long lunches and walnut-veneer offices, who's to know?

When the 22,000-member National Automobile Dealers Association got its first "experience refund," it was as surprised as a used-car buyer who finds a fresh spare in his trunk. "We weren't expecting any money back," a NADA official says. "We didn't know what to do with it, so we asked our lawyers. They said the only purely legal thing to do was rebate it to the members. So we did."

Other lawyers are not surprised by refunds, nor filled with resolve to return them. The American Bar Association's affiliate, American Bar Endowment, derives almost all of its income from "experience refunds." Although ABA's 260,000 members are informed when they buy group life that refunds will go to the Endowment, the ABA is much less straightforward about telling them what the total comes to. Endowment officials refused repeatedly to disclose a figure; one top official said he "couldn't remember the sums involved" but thought it was "somewhere in the million-dollar range." The answer—pried out of the Endowment only after days of siege—turns out to be $5.4 million for fiscal 1978, down slightly from the $6 million in fiscal 1977. ABA members are not given any hard dollar figures. Instead, they get a small computer printout telling them the *percentage* of refund for the year. One ABA member reports that his last printout showed 41 per cent of his premiums as having been returned to the Endowment. An Endowment official told him: "You have to compute the amounts yourself."

Endowment director Richard Breiner

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You're In Good Hands with Betty M. Cryer

Time was when insurance agents were thought of as more than just marketing tools. They were community leaders, people who knew your kids by name, who sent you handy desk calenders at Christmas, and were the first to call with condolences when your parrot flew into the fireplace.

At the modern frontier of direct-mail insurance sales there are no such friendly figures. In fact, there's just a batch of printed forms; and if you have a question about the policy terms or need some advice on what's best for you, good luck.

Take, for instance, Betty M. Cryer. When Hecht's, a Washington department store, mailed four-page letters offering supplemental health insurance to its credit-card customers, the letters went out over Cryer's signature. Cryer turns out to be a clerk in the department that handles bad checks and frauds. She didn't want to have anything to do with insurance. But *somebody* had to pass the insurance sales exam in order to sign the letter. Hecht's management obliged Cryer to do that, then didn't even give her a commission for her efforts.

In "her" letter to customers, Cryer explains how Hecht's searched for the "nationally recognized leader in providing outstanding protection" with credit-card insurance, and eventually settled on Beneficial Standard Life of California. What was the procedure for this exhaustive search? "That was never divulged to me," Cryer said. "Being an employee, you are told what you have to do and I was told it would be Beneficial Standard." What if someone calls Hecht's for information about his insurance? "I have no access to any records," Cryer said. "I was instructed by the insurance company that any questions should be directed to them."

Cryer's warm personal appeal was written by Direct Marketing Corp. of America, according to that company's officials. Direct Marketing is in a unique position to advise Hecht's customers on Beneficial Standard's stature as the "nationally recognized leader." Beneficial Standard *owns* Direct Marketing. A nearly identical letter, offering nearly identical insurance, was sent to *Playboy* subscribers. That letter went out over the signature of a "William C. Lloyd, Fidelity Interstate Life." Beneficial Standard also owns Fidelity Interstate.

Direct-mail insurance can be profitable and low-priced at the same time because almost all the cost of insurance is finding, selling, and doing the paperwork on a customer. If Beneficial "finds" customers using Hecht's mailing list, and signs them up in one fell computerized swoop, it's cut out the middlemen.

Compare the expense of ordering Betty M. Cryer, a clerk, to sign your letter, to financing a whole battalion of insurance agents uniformed in wingtips and cardigans. It costs a lot of money to train and service those earnest young fathers you see in the television ads, studying hard at the John Hancock Institute. The institute is a real place in Boston. Real agents go there and really do call their wives in Little Rock to tell them how rigorously they are studying. It's not cheap to pay all those guys humming "The John Hancock Theme" in the background.

Real agents are upset that direct-mail insurance skims off the cream of profitable policies, leaving them to struggle with 19-year-old dropouts who want insurance for cars with six carburetors. That, of course, is competition. Real agents will have to find ways to compete.

But it would be nice if Hecht's customers knew that Betty M. Cryer is just a name slapped onto a letter that might as well have been signed, "HAL 9000." And that they can't call Hecht's with questions about their policies. Cryer would tell them that, if she were allowed to speak up over the sound of the chorus humming "The Hecht's Theme" in the background.

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refused to be interviewed; his deputy, Melverene Stevens-Gibson, said she would speak "only if we could edit whatever you publish." Why not talk? "It would be leaving too many doors open," she said cryptically. It turned out there may be good reasons for her reticence; the Internal Revenue Service is investigating the Endowment's insurance-refund uses. IRS investigators are believed to be looking both at the ABA members' practice of computing for themselves the value of their refunds and then deducting those refunds from their taxes as charitable contributions; and at the non-profit status of the Endowment itself.

Whatever the IRS decides, the ABA's chief spokesman, public affairs director Richard Collins, claims ignorance of the Endowment's arrangements. "I've never heard of this question before," he said. "Could you give me those insurance terms again?"

The American Bar Association doesn't control the Endowment, Collins said. True, it is an "affiliated organization" with the same members as ABA, but it has a different board of directors—one over which ABA has "no control whatsoever," according to Collins. It happens, however, that both organizations share the same building, in which they are the sole tenants. What does the Endowment do with its money? Collins and Endowment attorneys explained that money from the insurance refunds supports "legal research and public service projects." The Endowment gave $3.2 million in 1978 to support such work. But its financial statement shows that it also spent $1.4 million in "operating expenses." In short, the Endowment appears to have spent 43 cents to administer each dollar in grants.

Phi Delta Phi and the similar Phi Alpha Delta legal fraternity go a step beyond the Endowment. The fraternities invite members to name them as beneficiaries—a bold move which certainly cuts out the administrative inconvenience of locating your survivors.

Until recently, association insurance brokering was the province of small, unheralded firms. Jones & Co., which handles only association policies (see "Take a Lawyer to Dinner" on page 13), claims to be the largest broker-administrator. But Alexander & Alexander and Marsh McLennan, the largest independent brokers, are now aggressively going after association business. So are the major insurance underwriters themselves. Associations and their sophisticated mailing lists represent large blips on the radar screen of profit. What the future holds for direct-mail marketing of insurance is clearly: More.

Into The Showers

The logical next step is already being taken—the selling of group insurance to people who hadn't even thought of themselves as belonging to a group. If you have a charge card at Hecht's, you're part of a "group." You qualify even if all you've done is buy a shower curtain. You're on Hecht's computer-updated mailing list, and that makes you a member of a "group" to the insurance industry.

Group insurance plans, as such, have certain legitimate and undeniable advantages. By their very nature, they are cheaper to administer than individual plans and therefore cheaper to buy. They do offer the benefit of automatic acceptance, an important provision for older buyers. But there's no legitimate reason to throw camouflage nets over the finances of these plans.

The insurance industry may well be the nation's most effective grassroots lobby, able to deploy legions of agents in practically every community at the first sign of unfriendly legislation. The industry has been able to keep regulation out of the grasp of the federal government and within the domain of state insurance commissions, largely dominated by former industry people and easily controlled. But the rising whirlwind of direct-mail promotions through associations suggests, at the very least, the need for a comprehensive federal disclosure law. Association members should be told the details of coverage, the risks, and—most of all—where their premiums go and how to get "experience refunds" back. At the same time, associations which claim to be dues-financed should be compelled to operate as such, instead of using insurance refunds as a concealed way to increase income without increasing dues. Then members could decide for themselves what they want to do with their refunds—and whether they really want to pay for the glittering headquarters buildings in Washington. ■

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Fear of Success

If you want me, she said, I'll be hiding under the bed

by Gregg Easterbrook

When Rob Cloherty changed his jogging habits, his lover, Jill Seerbaugh, took it for a bad omen. Nearly every morning of their two years in Des Moines—where they'd gone to take better jobs and a house together—Rob had indulged in a rococo ritual. Up at 7:00; drive 20 minutes to Greenwood Park; run for 20 minutes; drive back to the house for cold cereal. There was no need for all the driving. The sidewalks around the house were tree-lined and uncongested, appropriately flat. Each morning, Jill would watch through half-open and sedimented eyes as Rob stumbled into this routine, she musing that his urge to drive was some defect owing to a boyhood in Los Angeles.

But then the commuting to the park stopped. He ran around the block for 20 minutes, came back and made Jill breakfast. Hotcakes, mushroom omelettes, crunchy little English muffin sandwiches arranged on a platter. "No one's ever made me breakfast before," Jill said. It was a bad omen.

Gregg Easterbrook is an editor of The Washington Monthly. *The people in this story are real. The names are not.*

Jill was right. The romance was about to end, although not for the reasons you might guess. Rob's display of affection was genuine, not a theatrical drop to mask some offstage presence like another woman.

"It makes me feel good to do this," he explained. "I like you. I like to show you I like you. Besides, I'm hungry."

But the sudden interest in short-order cookery was a sign of what would finish them off as lovers. Their situation is not unique. The problem wedging into their romance, a problem that would prove to be beyond discussion, a problem that a short time ago would have seemed unimaginable, is squeezing closed the ventricles of romance for so many of us who are young and somewhere near sincerity.

When they met in California, he a law clerk, she a business reporter, the question of when their romance would start was a mere formality. They fit together fast, and it worked both ways; even their cynical and dissipated friends were impressed with the arrangement. Rob had an offer for a well-paying job in insurance law in Des Moines; Jill contrived to land a job there with the local bureau of a trade paper. When she

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said to him, "Let's go away somewhere together," and he said, "Even Iowa?", they found a house, divided the closets, and thought they had it made.

Rob's new job involved stalling the payment of insurance claims so his clients—underwriting companies—could keep their money as long as possible. Sometimes he stalled payments to other corporations that could live without the money anyway; sometimes to widows. Occasionally he could stall until the widow died too.

After a while, he grew listless at work. He was billing every hour, and didn't care how much his clients had to pay, but some of the things he had to say to judges made him blush, particularly the requests for continuances when he didn't plan to spend another minute preparing his case. This isn't exactly wrong, he thought, but any reasonably bright mouse could be trained to get the cheese at the end of this maze.

"It's meaningless," he told Jill. "I want to quit. I want to do legal-aid work. Well, I don't know. Maybe that's foolish. At least I've got to try to do something that counts."

Jill was skeptical. She tried to keep conversation on the subject to a minimum, and often suggested that they go to movies. Prudence, of course, was called for. Nothing is more tedious than a man huffing on and on about saving the world, at some unspecified later date.

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Rob did switch jobs. He missed the money. But Jill alone made enough for them to live on. Everything else about the change delighted him. As a mainstream lawyer, he had been expected only to play out a series of rote incantations. The destinies of his corporate clients were beyond his influence. In law, the inability to change things—the blur of stasis—was a positive badge of success. As a paladin of the poor, Rob found, there were differences. He looked at his desk repeatedly until he figured out that he liked it because there were no more computer print-outs on it. He had clients who brought him doughnuts, got headaches, and needed shoes. He still spent almost all his time banging his head against the bench, accomplishing little but procedural details, but sometimes there were tangible results. He looked forward to dispossession cases. If he won, he could go home feeling satisfied, and his client could go home.

Many would find this line of work draining, but Rob thrived on it. He was delighted to discover himself one of those occasional men willing to waste time on an insignificant person rather than take his money. He grew more cheerful, more alert, more aware of his own good fortunes. "God," he told the small-claims judge one day, "I live with this beautiful woman and I act as if it's something that they had to give me because I signed up, like a diploma." He began to value his time with Jill more. He cut out wasted motion like the morning drive to Greenwood Park, so he could have the chance for little gestures like making breakfast.

Neither was convinced there was any Larger Significance to Rob's new work. There was an awful lot of defending the usual gang of suspects, people Rob would just as soon not run across while he was out jogging. Maybe legal aid work would help usher in the millenium, or maybe it would just burden Rob with giving the obligatory boring speech about public service at the bar association banquet. But its purpose was beginning to encroach on Jill.

"And what do you expect *me* to do?" she asked. "Do?" he answered. "What you do now. More often. Slightly lower and to the left." She said, "No, I mean it. My job is okay. It could be better. But I can't think of anything else to *do*."

As a reporter, her job was to chronicle a society choking itself on confusion. She wasn't expected to change that, or even to pluck truth from the chaos. Like most of us, she figured she couldn't if asked. She lay in bed and heard the breakfast pans clunking every morning, and pulled the comforter a little higher around her shoulders. She got a nice meal and a nice long kiss, much nicer than she figured she deserved, and watched Rob head out to look for better ways of running things. Rob's growing admiration of her gave Jill a shudder of tense discomfort; she didn't want to search for any truth, all she wanted to do was hide under the bed. She was as much afraid that Rob would succeed with life, and her, as he would fail; she wanted to deny either possibility. It drove her apart from Rob, this fear of success.

Every few weeks he brought her some little present, like a flannel shirt, and she began to dread the next one. The morning

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she left, Jill stumbled with a suitcase in the front hall, elbows flailing, and knocked over a flower vase she'd found for Rob in Sausalito.

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There's not much you can tell about the current set of young adults by analyzing the schools they pick, the things they buy, the jobs they fill. There are only so many schools, and the best will always be busy. If campus radicals show up on Wall Street and in the Pentagon, collars starched and hair conditioned with animal proteins, it is because the jobs are there and someone will be found to fill them. We all need material things, and all but the ascetic must accept the limitations and obligations that accompany them.

But not so in romance. Romance is not mandatory and not supervised. In romance the opportunity exists for an infinite variety of misguided arrangements, for creative expression of all our thin and dilute disabilities. Today we have the dangerous flexibility to express ourselves in whatever romantic adventure we can invent. That's the place to look, to understand us.

Jill may seem odd for abandoning her lover because he became more interesting, more affectionate. But out on the street, she had a lot of company. She found her fear of success fanning out among the romantic lives of her friends and business peers. Her fear suggests an evolving social standard—a standard of willing disappointment. We're not just prepared to be disappointed, cauterized by past wounds and determined not to be struck again; we *want* to be disappointed. We can relax only in a hammock strung between the notions that no one—self or others—is really deserving. This insidious conviction makes us want our love lives to mean as little as possible; we want the hammock-strings to snap at the least tension.

On the surface, the loss of the romance between Rob and Jill would seem to reduce to politics. If you believe things are beyond control, what could be more discomforting than the company of someone who thinks otherwise—someone who will not accept the majority opinion, determined by show of hands in pockets, that nothing can be done? But the modern romance can tolerate a political or social commitment as long as its undesirable elements—passion, and the danger of elevating success—do not carry over into the love life.

It is tempting to see willing disappointment in romance as a symptom of self-obsession: since no lover can rival in grandeur the upper-case Self, what is to be gained from giving one's affection? But me-mania is a fashion, not a level of the spirit. The fear of success—Jill leaving a lover who becomes more affectionate, fearful she might be expected to do the same—is the exact reverse of self-obsession. It is a consequence of the words we have learned to repeat to ourselves, over and over—"It never really mattered, anyway"—trying to excuse the absence of the great humanistic leaps whose imminence has been proclaimed repeatedly through our lifetimes, but whose effects have yet to be observed.

Many of us won't vote, not because politics is soiled with scandal but because supporting a politician, any politician, implies he could do something about the world. That implies that *we* could do something. We long for unaccountable tenured jobs; not because we are afraid to try for something grand and not reach it—*that* is fear of *failure*—but rather because we believe it foolish to gamble for accomplishments when accomplishments will cause more to be expected of us. Better to pass a life writing carefully hedged denials, in an office muffled with hanging plants.

Maybe that can be in work and politics, but how can that be in romance? Wouldn't people hold out there, against all pressures, with every reserve of dignity? No, a romance can be endangered by sheer fear of success alone. Thinking too little of yourself is at first a comfort, soon an addiction, then a curse. Those who would tell you otherwise—the passionate lover who brings affection and adulation—become the most suspicious of all.

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When Vicky Teller changed her letter writing habits, her husband, Aaron Teller, took it for a bad omen.

Vicky and Aaron met in college in Ohio. They courted slowly and in equal shares, Aaron asking for study dates in the library, Vicky timing her arrivals at the dining hall so they could sit together by methodical coincidence. Vicky had at her disposal all the wonderful apparatus of romance most college students lacked: an apartment of

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> 'Romance is not mandatory and not supervised. . . the opportunity exists for an infinite number of misguided arrangements.'

her own away from the campus, a car, wine glasses of real glass. The first night they slept together, Aaron stirred in the bed as they were watching the dawn, and asked, "What should I do now? Should I get a cab or something?" She had to tell him she would rather he stay, but would drive him home if he wanted.

After commencement and their marriage on a golf course, Vicky continued on to graduate school. Aaron, bored with academics, sifted through some jobs, from city-hall clerk to piano-playing in black-tie night clubs. He tried to start a business making coffee tables out of tree stumps, but he couldn't find enough tree stumps. "You look sexy when you're dirty," Vicky told him once, when he was dusted with sawdust and filmy crud from an attempt at carpentry. He hit his thumb with the hammer.

They ended up in Boston, where Aaron found an advertising sales job that pleased him. Vicky enrolled in a Ph.D. program in clinical psychology, one of those fields where even the most accomplished have a great deal of difficulty explaining just what it is they do. Vicky got good grades, but the plodding pace of the program discouraged her.

"You graduate and retire on the same day," she told Aaron.

For diversion, she started playing the clarinet. She'd learned as a child and, although she'd long since stopped taking lessons, she had practiced enough to stay in touch. To her surprise, her playing advanced rapidly. Soon she was playing weekends with a first-name jazz ensemble ("That's Ralph on bass over there, and Vicky on clarinet. . . ."). She got a reasonable offer to teach the instrument. Eventually she decided the world of clinical psychology could carry on without her.

"You shouldn't quit," Aaron told her. "You made a commitment to carry it through."

She answered, "You made a commitment to tree stumps."

"That's different," he said.

Vicky found life as a clarinet teacher delightful. Although she had no chance for the professional acclaim she might have won in academics, music seemed real and immediate. People either clapped or they didn't.

Aaron liked music, and looked forward to the weekend jazz dates so he could sit in the audience and nod knowingly. He liked the shadowy recesses of the little tables in the clubs, where darkness was refreshing, and he could sit and listen, with nothing expected of him.

Though her playing was time-consuming, it was far less so than school. Vicky found herself home more often and thinking of Aaron more. There were other joys for them both; for a while, their love-making became more exciting. Vicky felt more enthusiastic than before; Aaron found her smoky hint of artistic decadence an irresistible attraction.

"You're imagining things," she told him. "I'm a square, much straighter than you." "Then let me imagine," he said. "It's fun."

Aaron wasn't sure what to make of the changes in his wife's life. Her sudden artistic interest gave him a little trouble, making him wonder if he, too, should be doing something "creative" or "meaningful." But Aaron knew that advertising had to be sold, at least as much as notes had to

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be blown. And this isn't the movie you've seen, where the wife goes on to surpass her husband, leaving him contemplating a revolver. Vicky was too far along in life to progress to artistic stature; she would settle into a routine of teaching smart-ass kids to read music. It was not her job change but her growing passion that scared Aaron.

Through the years, Aaron found Vicky pleasantly cool to the touch. Not that he was afraid of unleashed emotion: Sometimes they had shouting fits around the house over one thing or the other; once, because Aaron left the car in first, despite their agreement to leave it in reverse, and Vicky rammed the front of the garage trying to back out. The flush passed, mumbled apologies were exchanged, and the incident was forgotten. This seemed a sensible way to let off steam. But Vicky's slight frost of romantic indifference had always been, to Aaron, one of her most alluring qualities. Even when they had been dating several years, sometimes almost nightly, she would say, in passing, "Let's call each other again soon." She wasn't playing hard to get. She was too interested in being gotten for that. It was just her way of being relaxed. Aaron found it alluring because he thought it showed selective taste, a lack of any foolish notions about him.

As she continued to grow more passionate, physically and romantically, Aaron began to suspect her common sense. As Vicky found herself reaching for Aaron more, he began to drift farther away, a floating leaf.

Aaron sometimes talked with Vicky about children. He was in no hurry to have them, because there was nothing in particular he wanted to show them. Like so many others, Aaron steeped himself in the knowledge that he would accomplish, at most, about the same as his parents; spread it among fewer children; and be far more preoccupied with himself along the way. "How did my father bring up five children?" he asked one day. "I have trouble getting the shopping done."

Until this generation of young adults, mothers and fathers had largely succeeded in convincing their sons and daughters that things were always getting better. Maybe in little nudges too slight to feel, but always better. Aaron found things pretty good. But he lacked the conviction they would get better. He did not plan to break new ground, or long to see his children born into a better world. And he could not imagine what a sensible lover would see in that.

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Aaron found it acceptable to use a lover, not in a hostile way, but for pleasant and considerate companionship; when the using was mutually agreeable, a basis for marriage would be formed. They took turns doing each other's laundry in college; they took turns being a little romantic. Now, as Vicky's affection for Aaron grew steadily, it seemed to him that only someone with some kind of character flaw would have passionate desires for a man unworthy of the effort.

Vicky began, for instance, to write Aaron letters—even on days when they were together. Most were just endearing notes—"Thinking of you, guess who?"—but some were regular letters on her feelings about marriage and the world and general. The letters were pleasant and positive, and they made Aaron nervous.

Vicky chose a poor medium for affection, letters having been diminished to a shunned and almost ridiculed form—but not for the reasons that pop to mind; not because of the ease of telephones, or because we are too busy employing labor-saving devices to have the time for reading and writing. Committing words to paper lends them importance, a texture and permanence. Magnifying the importance of small events—a key test of romance—is in all ways to be avoided. It bothered Aaron that so many thoughts were being set to paper, lying around the house in wait, liable to turn up again.

What do you do to rid yourself of a passionate lover? You can't rise to their heights when you want to hide under the bed. Aaron made himself testy and gruff, hoping a flash of seedy reality would calm Vicky down. He would ask her to save a table for him at the club, then not show up. But lovers have unpredictable habits. Vicky did not get angry, which made Aaron even more miserable. As he acted worse and worse, she became more forgiving of him. It confirmed his suspicions. She had lost her common sense.

After they were separated, Aaron's last step toward conciliation was technocratic. Therapy 45 minutes twice a week, and no unstructured discussion at unscheduled hours. "We're upgrading our relation-

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'It bothered Aaron that so many thoughts were being set to paper, lying around the house in wait, liable to turn up again.'

ship," he explained. In her confusion, Vicky too was reduced to babbling something about their need to "adjust models." She dared not say, "It'll kill me if he doesn't come back." Further declarations of passion, she felt, would make her husband all the more likely to reject her.

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Fear of success offers no pleasure. It's just a wrecking ball to knock the upper floors off romance. Perhaps people like Jill Seerbaugh and Aaron Teller are isolated examples, bound up in love affairs never meant to last, and waiting for the first out. Perhaps. Experiment on your friends. Next time you spot one with that jittering corona of ill-at-ease, try these two simple tests. First, try to compliment your friend, in a sincere way. See if it does not produce graceless confusion, rather than thanks. Next, speak to him of your convictions in life and loves. You will find claims of passionate romantic conviction to be the only ones more ridiculed than claims of social conscience. In a day when there is fear of success, passion is the most suspicious of all qualities.

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Ed Hoover often walked the bumpy neighborhood streets in San Francisco. He liked to stare indiscreetly at the lovely old houses, with their towering windows and dark trim, shelved together no two the same. Many evenings last summer, he caught sight of an elegant young woman sitting on the landing of a walk-up, regarding the twilight. One time he passed close by her. It was nearly night, but in the spikes of orange light remaining, she sat quietly, writing a letter.

The scene stuck in his mind. Later, he wrote a poem to this woman of letters. Let's not quibble over taste, and call his verse passable—restrained praise with a little humor. Embarrassed to hand such a thing to a stranger—after all, what if she had been making out a grocery list?—he left the poem in her mailbox, with a brief note of explanation.

He hoped for a call with thanks. Such ceremony is not for our day. Not only did the woman fail to reply; she vanished from the landing for good. After a time, Hoover inquired of her neighbors—had they seen her? None had; maybe gone to visit her sister, one said suspiciously.

Hoover worried that he had propelled her into some fantasy of urban paranoia—that she was hiding out, holed up at some isolated hotel, registered under an assumed name and answering only to passwords. Much later, and only by coincidence, did he learn the truth.

Urban nightmares didn't drive her from the twilight. The attention did. When the romantic offers his sincere praise, his subject must rise to its level. The romantic's praise stirred in this woman the fear of success, for it represented something not false enough to pass for real.

The woman of letters, in other times, might have been giddy with excitement; might have been offended by the presumption; or, best, might have been intrigued, and replied in kind. Now, autistic silence was her only response, and many would say she did the right thing. That tells all you need to know about us. ■

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'I am SOMEBODY!'

. . . but who?

by Clarence Page

Jesse Jackson's staged entrances into page-one politics are small masterpieces of showmanship. In the Middle East, at Camp David, wherever cameramen gather, he descends as if on wires, *deus ex video*. He stays just long enough to spin off a few provocative quotes, in self-contained 20-second snippets shrewdly timed to accommodate the editors in the cutting room. Then he is up and away, back to his Chicago base at Operation PUSH (People United to Save Humanity), long enough at least to pick up his messages and check with his travel agent.

Not everyone is impressed with these spectacles. But there is another side of Jackson, one that is almost universally admired—his performance as director of PUSH for Excellence, a motivation program for ghetto kids. Mothers are impressed with PUSH-Excel; liberals are impressed; hardline editorialists are impressed. The federal government is so impressed it gives Jackson money he hasn't even asked for. The general view is that he is doing something significant, something important, and doing it well.

This benevolence persists even though almost no one can explain what PUSH-Excel really is. The government officials who fund it speak of it in vague generalizations. Few of the political reporters covering Jackson's global media events have any direct knowledge of Chicago's ghetto or of programs presumed to be operating there. Even PUSH-Excel officials themselves are hard-pressed to provide a 25-word description of the program's function. PUSH-Excel is so elusive, so amorphous, that it is called a "program" only as a matter of semantic convenience.

Like so many other products of the civil rights movement of the 1960s, Jesse Jackson is more comfortable moving than administering. As a reporter who has covered Jackson intermittently for ten years, I know that in oratorical skills he has few peers; nobody does a better job of working a crowd into a frenzy just before the plate is passed. But Jackson falters when it comes time to put away the pulpit and cope with details. In a way, this makes the mysterious PUSH-Excel an ideal vehicle for him. He prefers to call it a "movement" rather than a program, and the analogy fits well. With movements, the destination is less important than the journey.

Clarence Page is an urban-affairs reporter for The Chicago Tribune.

Full Eclipse of the Agenda

Jackson's indifference to follow-through has propelled him into situations that would have been disastrous for someone without his survival skills. Last year, for example, he proclaimed a series of

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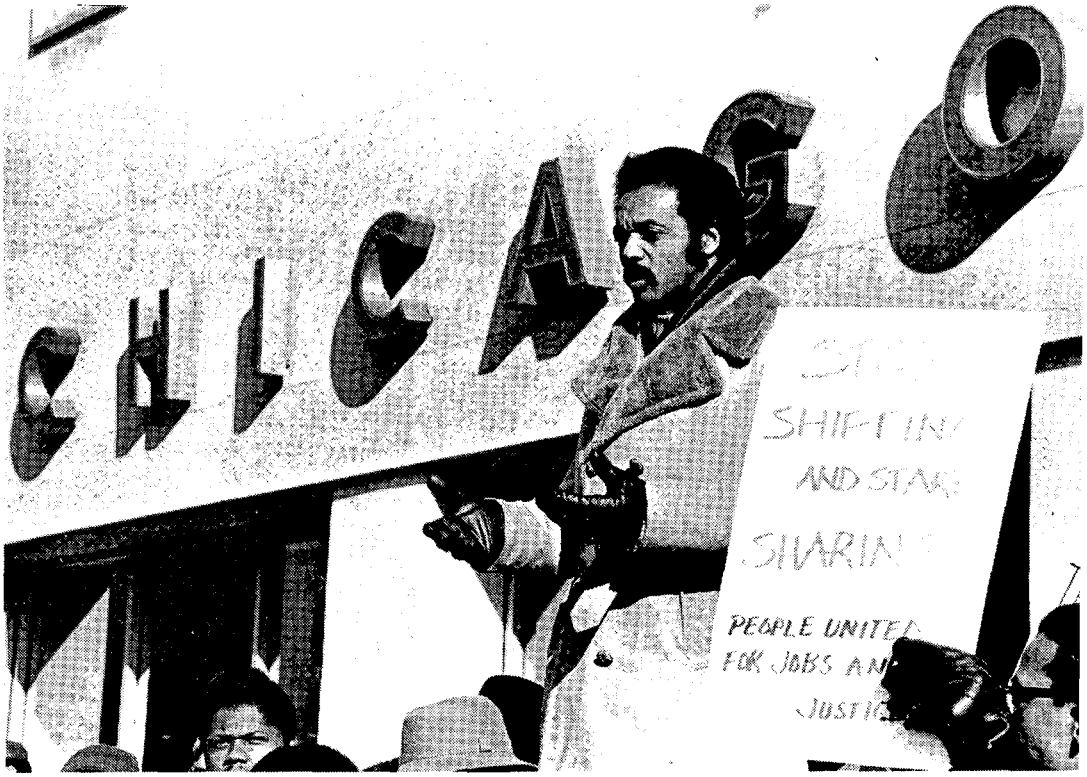

If it's Saturday, this must be Chicago—*Having flown in the night before to run PUSH's weekly Saturday morning meeting, Jackson found time to appear at a rally.*

Jackson moves on, drumming into the kids the point that participation in PUSH-Excel is voluntary. Participating students must pledge to study two hours every night, without distraction from television, radio, or the telephone. This rudimentary rule sends shock waves through the students, many of whom are addicted to the mental wallpaper of television in ways at least as insidious as addiction to drugs.

For their part, parents must pledge to monitor their children's study time, exchange phone numbers with teachers, and pick up report cards personally, so that they have to face the grades. Teachers must pledge to give "meaningful" homework assignments, and to call parents if a PUSH-Excel student misses school for two consecutive days or falls behind.

Jackson lays out his "ethical code of conduct," a compilation of fundamentalist self-help values drawn straight from his Baptist immersion. The code, Jackson says, offers "alternative life styles to drugs, alcohol, violence, teenage pregnancy, and other forms of decadence that detract from an educational atmosphere." He urges that it be "enforced," although he's vague about what that means.

To help spread this gospel, PUSH-Excel encourages—but doesn't always establish—various auxiliary projects. These include "academic Olympics," history and math clubs, "reproductive health conferences" (sex education), clubs to "foster leadership," and visits by "impact educators"—athletes, businessmen, and entertainers who can provide "positive role models."

PUSH-Excel's finale takes place on high school graduation day. Jackson spins images of seniors marching into the sunlight with a diploma in one hand and a voter registration card in the other. PUSH-Excel claims to have registered 10,000 seniors in Chicago and about 12,000 elsewhere. With the card comes information on the election process and how to operate voting machines.

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After the voter registration exercise, PUSH-Excel is complete. That's it: pledge cards, a rousing assembly, maybe a few clubs, and a challenge to change the world by exercising the franchise. That's PUSH-Excel, the "program" that is Jesse Jackson's current claim to fame.

Tie Your Own Bootstraps

Nobody can seriously oppose hard studying, voting, and good health habits—and that, of course, is the basic reason why PUSH-Excel sounds so good to so many people. It's difficult to find anything in Jackson's menu that wouldn't be served up by any self-respecting school system. But the systems that ask for his help appear to have lost their self-respect, their ability to motivate teachers, students, and parents; they should be doing that job themselves, but if they won't or can't, it's a good thing they can call on Jesse Jackson. That's the obvious reaction to the man and his "program," and that's the reaction he has so successfully cultivated among people who have never taken a close look at PUSH-Excel.

There is less enthusiasm among the handful of people who have looked. Some regard Jackson as an ideological turncoat. Black leaders like Coretta King are disturbed by Jackson's nothing-to-fear-but-us message. It seems strange, coming from a man who built his reputation on seeming to defy "the system"; he now seems to endorse it, spreading a gospel which implies that if poor black kids would just work hard, dress smartly, and get home at a decent hour, things would be all right. Among sociologists, this is commonly called "blaming the victim for his condition," and they don't approve of it. Some white liberals are especially aghast at PUSH-Excel's slogans. They are astonished that a black leader would call black kids exactly what many of them are: sassy little thugs who never do anything useful, even for themselves. Such critics are more disturbed by Jackson's admission of the obvious reality than by the question of whether he has a legitimate strategy for doing anything to change it.

Jackson is unimpressed with these philosophical objections. "Suppose we said to students, 'All you have to do is study hard,'" he says. "That would be a cop-out. But we're not saying that. We challenge youngsters to turn their television sets off at night. There are some things the system ought to do, and some things *you* ought to do." When pressed, he cites his celebrated battles with the Chicago school board and the federal Department of Health, Education and Welfare to prove his sustained opposition to the status quo. Whether such battles are genuine or media stunts is probably beside the point. Jackson's philosophical argument seems reasonable enough: nobody is going to do anything about "the system" once he or she has been permanently crippled by it, and Jackson is trying to catch people in the last moments while they still can be rehabilitated.

The more important objection to PUSH-Excel—and the one that's almost never raised—involves the question of whether the "program" can produce anything of substance without the full-time participation of its superstar. The obvious analogy is a rock concert. With or without Jesse Jackson, PUSH-Excel relies on smoke and mirrors, but without him, there's no music.

The smoke and mirrors themselves bother some people. Thomas Todd, a lawyer and former PUSH vice president who fell out with Jackson, says PUSH-Excel is "a non-program, a public-relations stunt based on rhetoric and nothing more." A look at even some of the more innocuous aspects of the PUSH-Excel plan suggests there's truth in this view. For example, the idea of bringing in "impact educators" to provide "positive role models"—aside from some obnoxious terminology, what could be wrong with that? Nothing, but PUSH-Excel provides no formal mechanism for rounding up these paragons and bringing them into the schools. Not surprisingly, Jackson's big-name "impact educators" do most of their impacting in Los Angeles, where there is a ready pool of stars to call on. In some cases—for example, some appearances of ex-Cubs star Ernie Banks at Chicago schools—PUSH-Excel simply attaches its name to a celebrity who was planning to visit the school anyway. Since Jackson is friends with many sports and entertainment stars, their names often turn up in connection with PUSH. But mostly they show up at PUSH's Saturday morning headquarters meetings in Chicago—where cameras are always rolling—instead of

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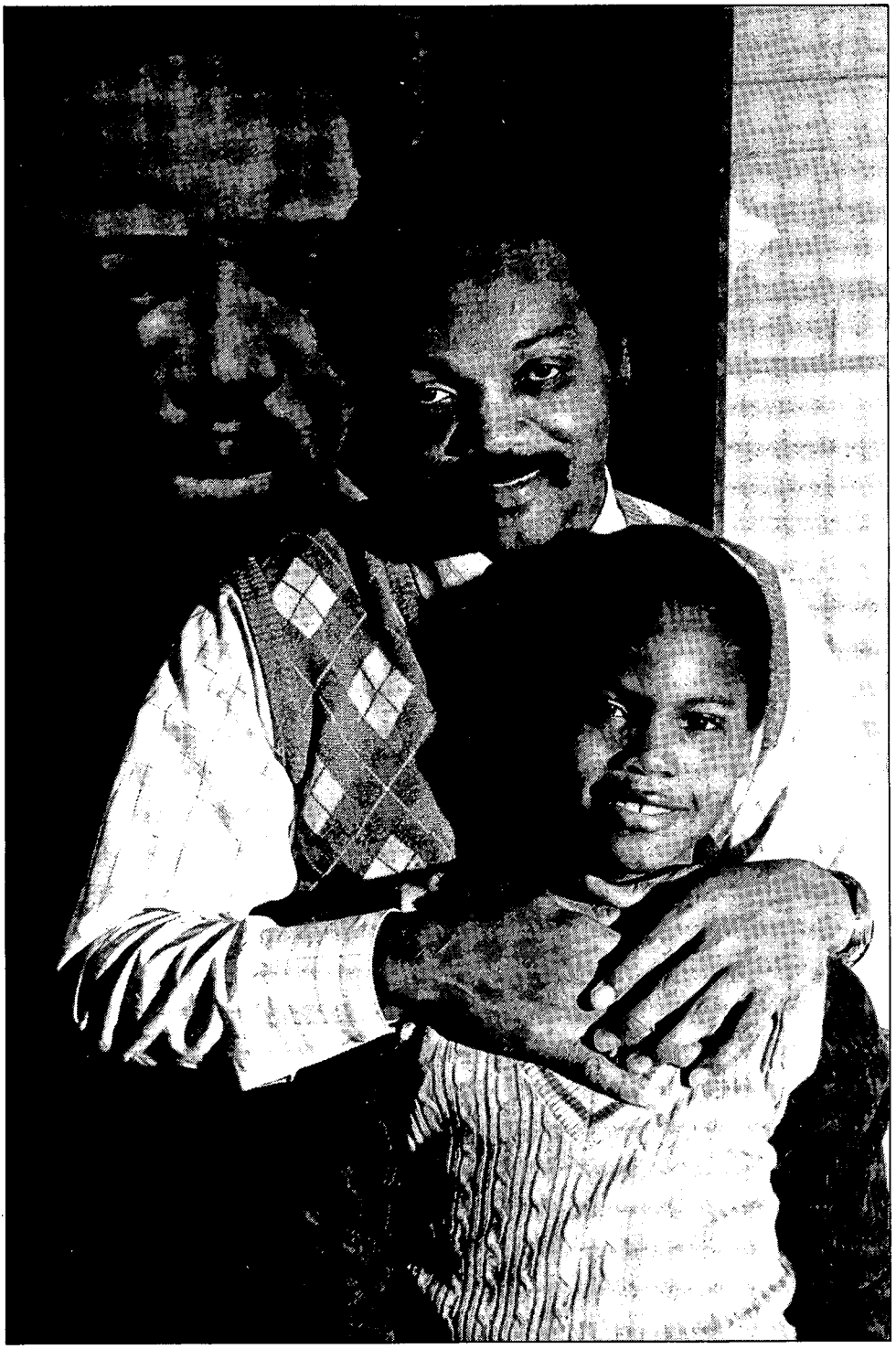

STEVEN M. LEONARD

Like father, like son, like poster—*At PUSH headquarters, Jackson with one of the few kids who can count on his regular attention—nine-year-old son Yusef.*

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making unnoticed speeches in grim high school auditoriums.

The rock-star side of Jackson bothers some people too—not because they envy his charisma but because it's based on a distortion of history. Jackson is generally portrayed as some sort of revolutionary—and if someone's going to give a back-to-basics speech, the best man for the job is a revolutionary; a call for hard discipline, no TV, and saving it for your spouse would sound like pure country corn coming from somebody else. But Jackson is the beneficiary of the kind of amnesia that afflicts the media from time to time. Inspection of his record reveals that he has seldom spoken a line more radical or inflammatory than his mentor, Dr. King. Jackson's *image* is more radical, of course—and as long as coverage goes no deeper than the length of his Afro, the street lingo of his press conferences, and the cut of his suits, people will always be surprised to find him clothed in three-piece fundamentalism. The gullibility of reporters works to Jackson's advantage; if they keep proclaiming that he used to be a revolutionary, the PUSH-Excel gospel seems all the more dramatic.

Erasable Chalk-Talks

But if the media have done much of Jackson's image-building for him, it is still a compelling image. He can give a "chalk talk" any Big Ten coach would be proud of, and the psych-up quality of his famous audience response chant (Jackson: "I may be on welfare. . . ". Crowd:". . . *but I am somebody!")* may owe less to revival preaching than to sidelines cheering ("Gimme an S. . . *S*! Gimme an O. . . *O*! . . ."). Jackson was a successful but unnoticed quarterback in college, and if he remains a frustrated jock at heart today, that serves ghetto kids well—because they know that sport is the one career field where they have at least a remote shot at succeeding purely on their own ability.

Anyone who watches Jackson in action knows that he can rivet attention, he can compel, he can motivate—but not by long distance, not when he is off somewhere commenting on SALT talks or hugging up Yassir Arafat. In PUSH-Excel, he has a "program" that depends on the forcefulness of his personality to succeed, but that personality skitters back and forth, back and forth, never really advancing the ball or launching a long bomb.

He objects to this characterization, of course, but if there's one athletic passion Jackson lacks, it's keeping stats. When you ask him gritty questions like how much money Excel takes in, how it's spent, how many students are affected, and whether academic improvements are ever confirmed, he looks slightly annoyed.

"I'm the chief executive officer," he told me. "You'll have to talk to the chief operating officers about that." Suddenly you're in just another bureaucracy. Sitting in PUSH's headquarters—a huge converted synagogue in Chicago's south-side Hyde Park—Jackson is like a government agency director. He can rattle off impressive-sounding macro-stats about the problems of urban education. But when you inquire about results, he sends you trekking off to find another layer of officials somewhere else, down the hall, up the stairs. . . . And it comes as no real surprise that they don't have the numbers either.

Checking into PUSH-Excel, you find that the very existence of the program came about indirectly, more or less by happenstance. In 1976, PUSH was in the worst financial straits of its always precarious existence. Crowds at the Saturday morning community meetings were falling off. PUSH-Expo, an annual showcase for black businesses, was losing money. PUSH's bank balance reportedly had dipped to $3,000 at a point when the organization owed $400,000, and some staffers were working without pay.

Though Jackson ministers to the poor, he was sensible enough to stuff PUSH's board of directors full of bankers and businessmen. They scrambled about for loans and grants to keep PUSH from failing. As they did, Jackson took the gospel of self-help—being applied, at that instant, to PUSH itself—and made it into a useful and highly marketable social rallying cry.

By December 1977, Jackson had the images of PUSH-Excel well enough sketched out to attract the producers of *60 Minutes* into profiling his pilot program. It looked fabulous on the tube; the publicity could hardly have been better if Jackson had written the script himself. Among the millions of people who saw the broadcast were Hubert Humphrey and Joseph Califano. Humphrey, stricken with

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the cancer that would end his life a month later, called the Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, and both agreed that PUSH-Excel deserved federal support. Within a week, the first $45,000 of HEW aid was on its way to Chicago. Jackson never even had to ask for it.

Since then, HEW has given another $700,000 for the PUSH-Excel programs in Chicago, Los Angeles, and Kansas City, and more HEW money is going to PUSH-Excel programs as they are set up in other cities. The Labor Department has supplied $500,000 in career-training money to five PUSH-Excel member schools. Local governments have provided funding for PUSH-Excel programs in Ohio, Louisiana, California, South Carolina, New York, Virginia, and Washington state. Private money for PUSH-Excel comes from the Ford, Rockefeller, CBS, and Chicago Community Trust foundations.

Those Who Can Teach, Do

Proof exists that the save-yourself slogans of Jesse Jackson's PUSH-Excel can work. The proof comes, however, not from anything Jackson has done but from a 31-student school called Westside Prep, in a tough black ghetto of Chicago, and from Marva Collins, the remarkable woman who is the mind and heart of the school—its owner, its principal, its sole teacher.

The students at Westside are rejects from Chicago's public school system, pigeonholed and stigmatized as "slow learners." Collins drills them with a back-to-basics philosophy that sounds very much like Jackson's.

"There are no free rides here," she tells her kids, walking up and down the aisles of a tiny classroom that has no teacher's desk at the front. She stares at each of them intently, almost ferociously. "You get it together or you go back to that fly-by-night school. You have the right to fail—if that's what you want to do."

The telling difference between Marva Collins and Jesse Jackson has more to do with engagement calendars than with philosophy. Unlike Jackson, who is always on his way somewhere, but rarely there, Collins is out of bed before dawn each morning and in her classroom all day, every day, five days a week, drilling and inspiring her kids.

Westside Prep, teaching kids from ages four to 13 in the environment of an old-time country schoolhouse, embodies educational reform on a profoundly simple level. Collins shuns all the modern teaching gimmicks (especially audio-visuals) that serve mainly to protect teachers from having to teach, and uses no class "subjects" or "periods." She just *teaches*, without specializing or compartmentalizing. When she's teaching arithmetic, for example, she also teaches ancient history and language roots—by discussing the life and times of Pythagoras, and by exploring the root Greek and Latin words for mathematical concepts.

What? Greek and Latin in the ghetto? Collins sees no reason why not. She is fiercely opposed to the idea that black children don't need to know about the foundations of the King's English, and she finds a moral in everything she teaches, whether it is the *Little Red Hen* or *Paradise Lost*. Her kids are frequently reminded: "You don't get something for nothing. No education, no work. No work, no money. No money, you starve."

Collins also uses preacher/congregation chants similar to Jackson's—but pauses to listen to the answers.

"How much money do you think you're worth?" she suddenly demands of one little girl.

"All the money in the world," the girl replies, in cool confidence.

"If I gave you a billion dollars, filled this room with million-dollar bills—" Collins is interrupted by murmurs and giggles. "*Wait* a minute! The good Lord gave you *two* ears and *one* mouth because He wants you to *hear* more than to *talk*. Now—how many of you would sell your knowledge for that money?"

"No, no, no!" A cacophony from the congregration. That response can be programmed, but there is more:

"If this room were filled with money,

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HEW's successor, the new Department of Education, is the largest single contributor, planning to give $3 million in the next two years.

As the beneficiary of government largesse, PUSH-Excel could naturally expect sooner or later to be evaluated, and such evaluations would determine whether or not the spigot would be shut off. In PUSH-Excel's case, however, the evaluators have fallen back on a time-honored recommendation—the need for further study.

In 1978 HEW put its subsidiary agency, the National Institute for Education, to work assessing PUSH-Excel's performance. In July 1979, NIE released a thick document full of page after page of technical rationalizations for why the abstract goals of the "program"—motivation, self-respect, responsibility—are so difficult to study and quantify. "We spent a lot of time

you're gonna spend it, and it will be gone," says a little boy quietly. "But if you keep what's in your head, gonna have that forever."

When disaffected students arrive at Westside Prep and discover they are expected to cope with Tolstoy and Thoreau, they go into shock at first. Collins force-feeds them. She moves constantly among the desks, looking over shoulders, scrutinizing progress, asking questions, listening to the answers, commenting, moving on. The dialogue between teacher and students is ceaseless. Soon, because of her combination of aggressiveness and patience, the force-feeding becomes unnecessary, and students discover that Jason and the Argonauts are pretty fair "impact educators," maybe even better than Ernie Banks and the Chicago Cubs or the other stars a program like PUSH-Excel recruits. Moreover, Collins refuses to get by on a quick gloss; she says she won't teach a book unless she has recently read it herself. "They understand if I understand," she says simply. "They don't if I don't."

Collins quit teaching in the public schools six years ago, frustrated and infuriated by meaningless rules, trivial conflicts, principals without principles, and teachers without vertebrae. Westside Prep, which she started in 1975, is the upper floor of her home; what with her classes and her reading, she often does not step outside for days in a row. Two assistants teach four- and five-year-olds to read in the front room—a room papered with compositions marked "cum laude!" and "tres bien!" and "excellent!" Collins works with older kids in the cramped classroom. There, stacks of dog-eared books are piled on the floor between the desks and in the aisles. Collins must twist and turn as she makes her way through the room. The lunch break, for

Marva Collins:

'My children don't fail. I don't let them fail.'

teacher and students alike, is only 20 minutes, and it is not really a break at all; between bites of a Big Mac, Collins goes right on teaching, explaining a grade, or listening to a child read aloud.

She drives the children as hard as she drives herself. Those with working parents are dropped off at her house at 8:00 a.m. and begin school immediately. The others arrive at 9:00. School goes straight through

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trying to find something about the program that wasn't vague," an NIE official says. "Specifics are not PUSH-Excel's strong suit." Eventually, NIE decided to evaluate PUSH-Excel over a three-year span, using three full-time Washington observers and part-time evaluators in six cities. The study will not be out until 1982, and NIE officials caution not to expect anything very conclusive even then. The most specific number associated with PUSH-Excel thus far is the $750,000 budgeted to study it.

Jackson freely admits that PUSH-Excel cannot be readily evaluated—a handy sort of program to have. "We're trying to change *attitudes* even the school system itself doesn't work on," he explains. "You only know when you fail—when another student can't read or gets pregnant." Don't wait for a 1982 NIE report, he will tell you. Instead, go talk to Chicago school princi-

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until 2:30. There is no recess. There is no recreation, no gym. She waves in the direction of the streets, the empty lots, the battered playgrounds: Those are the gyms for her kids, and there is plenty of time to play in them after school.

Her students make such remarkable progress that outsiders usually conclude they must be gifted, or at least from intellectual homes. This infuriates Collins, who accepts only children that the public school system couldn't or wouldn't accommodate. "I can make almost any child gifted," she says flatly. She provides the key ingredients abandoned by so many schools: hard work, patience, and concern for each individual child. "My philosophy is that my children don't fail," she says. "I don't let them fail. I'm right there at their shoulders all the time. I haven't sat down since I started teaching."

Her students do enjoy one important advantage over most ghetto kids. Their parents care enough about them to send them to her. Few of those parents can afford the $80-a-month tuition Collins charges, but they pay it anyway whenever they can—a direct financial commitment to their children that the public schools of America no longer require.

These days it is not uncommon to find reporters and television cameramen wedged in among the children in Collins's classroom. Marva Collins has been discovered, first by the Chicago press and more recently by the likes of *60 Minutes* and *People* magazine. She doesn't particularly object to the publicity—although it disturbs her to think that nobody seems to be able to find anyone else doing what she does—but so far she hasn't been swayed by it. Newspaper editorials have proposed that she take over Chicago's crippled school system; in January the Los Angeles County school board offered her $52,000 a year to become its superintendent. Collins has no interest in administering—she wants to *teach*—and the money doesn't interest her, because she understands the difference between money and satisfaction. "No one can buy what I do here, so they can stop offering me jobs."

The school itself could certainly use more money, but Collins is not about to ask for it, and when the federal Department of Health, Education and Welfare offered an unsolicited grant of $16,000, she turned it down. She didn't want government "experts"—deskbound doctors of education who couldn't teach a Slinky to go down stairs—coming in and harassing her with advice, regulations, evaluations.

This fall, Collins hopes to move her school to an old bank building a few blocks away, where there will be room for 150 students. The waiting list already has 800 names. She plans to add five teachers, and to pay them strictly from whatever tuition is actually collected.

It is hard to come away from talking to Marva Collins without a nagging pull of anxiety. She may someday cave in or burn out, given the pressures from a press determined to sanctify her and an educational establishment interested in co-opting her. Few human beings can remain forever indifferent to daily bouquets and offers of large sums of money—available if only she will stop doing what she does so well. But for now, at least, she devotes herself exclusively to salvaging the kids Jesse Jackson likes to talk about. And between talking and teaching, it seems safe to say, her kids can tell the difference—gonna have it in their heads, gonna have it there forever.

—*Magda Krance*

Magda Krance is a Chicago freelance reporter.

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pals: "They'll tell you absenteeism is down, vandalism is down. We're having an impact."

This would be good news, if only principals really said that. My interviews with principals of Chicago PUSH-Excel schools, and with members of the school board, were unsatisfying. Naturally, all of them had nice things to say about PUSH-Excel's intentions, but none could point to a specific positive effect.

"I'm always in favor of encouraging excellence," said the principal of Chicago Vocational High. "But we have a number of projects here to encourage excellence. It's hard to single out the effects of any single one." Of course, school officials have a vested interest in denying that an outsider might be able to do what they cannot. Theoretically, hard numbers like attendance figures should be objective. Unfortunately, they are at best inconclusive. Figures provided for six PUSH-Excel schools showed three with slight attendance increases, three with slight declines.

PUSH Comes to Nudge

I am a reporter, not a statistician, and it may be that I'm missing some subtlety buried in the numbers. But direct observation seems more trustworthy to me, and over the years of watching Jackson I've found very little evidence to suggest that his careening from issue to issue improves the chances that PUSH-Excel will succeed. Shouldn't he spend most of his time with the program, where he is needed? He bristles at this. "I would go crazy sitting in one place, talking more and more to fewer and fewer people," he told me. "Why should I settle for a more limited spot?"

He takes the argument a notch further, seeing racist overtones in questions raised about his globetrotting showmanship. "There are some assumptions made about the proper domain of black people," he says. "Wrong assumptions." Jackson says he is angry at being stereotyped as a "black leader" convenient to quote—"Nobody calls Jane Byrne a 'white mayor' "—and the implicit message he gets, from white politicians who have been pontificating about race relations for years without discernible credentials, is that he has no claim to expertise on Middle East issues simply because he's black.

This anger seems baffling, even suspicious. Jackson has been working hard for years to make sure reporters remember his name and number when they want a pithy quote from a spokesman for the black community. He has been markedly shrewd at exploiting the penchant of the media for grabbing the nearest plausible expert without checking to see whether he really has a constituency.

He can't be blamed, of course, for the media's failings, and he may well be right when he thinks white platitudes are more readily accepted than black platitudes. But this is to beg the most important question. Sure, there are hordes of white political figures wandering around tossing quotes to the networks. That's all they're good at. But Jackson is one of the few men alive who can actually communicate with ghetto kids. He has that rarest of talents—the ability to grab their attention, to break through the cycle of despair, to clear their drugged brains long enough to make them listen, long enough to tell them something about hope.

But instead of dedicating his time and effort to teaching poor black kids how to use the system for their own advantage, he uses it mainly for his own. A sample week recently consisted of hopping from Chicago to Washington to Detroit to Memphis and back. In that time, he talked about the Middle East on "Meet the Press." He talked about Chrysler with Lee Iacocca. He talked about ethnic issues with Jewish leaders. He held two press conferences. He spoke to a meeting of Memphis businessmen. He held a reception in his home for the chief minister of South Africa's Zulu tribe, and another for the Chicago company of the musical, *Your Arms Too Short to Box with God.* And somewhere in there he lectured two auditoriums-full of high school kids.

The Middle East was unaffected. Chrysler remained in peril. The Jews were not converted. The Memphis business climate did not change. The Zulus were doing all right without him and the musical was already selling well. They didn't need Jesse Jackson. But the kids, fired up and enthusiastic after his speeches, walked back out to the pallid ghetto streets, littered with peeling people going nowhere, and knew they would never see him again. Those are the ones who need Jackson. With NBC, he left his home number. With the kids, he left a stack of pledge cards.■

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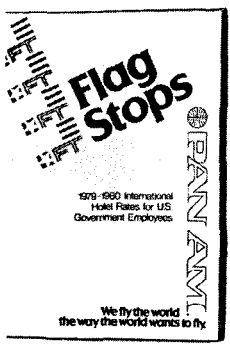

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Tidbits & Outrages

Wonder which placement agency handled this one...

CERT, a non-profit federation of 25 American Indian tribes that own a substantial share of the energy resources in the western half of the United States, has hired a new chief economist. His name is Ahmed Kooro; his nationality, Iranian; his last employer, the Ayatollah Khomeini.

California's Answer to Marva Collins

Do your kids leave Bosco rings on the Waterford crystal? Then get in touch with Guity Bet Badal of Beverly Hills. She just opened "Guity—The Finishing School," where nine-to-12 year-olds can get 12 lessons in table manners for $3,000.

THIS HAS BEEN A TEST. HAD IT BEEN AN ACTUAL STORY....

In January the Washington *Post* ran a front-page story under the headline: "Reagan to Keep Low Iowa Profile Despite Poll Slip." It conveyed the startling news that Reagan had slipped from 48 to 26 per cent support among Iowa Republicans.

The sixth paragraph of the story provided this important limited-warranty disclaimer: "The margin of error in polling, especially with a small sample (267 voters), means that Reagan's lead could be non-existent, or greater or smaller."

The New Calvinism

The advertisement in *The New York Times* is from Saks Fifth Avenue. It shows a rugged man in a T-shirt. The headline reads, "Sporting the Tee. From the Labors of Calvin Klein... Proletarian Chic."

Y'all Pylon Board

Years ago, a California airline hired humorist Stan Freberg to come up with a series of commercials that frankly addressed people's fears about airline safety. Freberg produced a batch of spots that poked fun at the seeming cool of hardened air travelers by suggesting that, when a plane taxied down the runway, it was "sweaty palms all the way." The airline's ticket sales immediately went down in flames. The spots were canned, along with some of the executives who had commissioned them.

Ever since then, airlines have been probing with little success for subtler ways to play upon the air passenger's reasonable fear for his life. So there is a niche in the Advertising Hall of Fame waiting for the person at Ogilvy and Mather who came up with the latest series of television commercials for TWA. In case you haven't seen them, they feature a father bidding his son goodbye at the terminal. The child looks worried until he sees that Dad has a choice between a Boeing 747 and a Lockheed L-1101. "At TWA the only wide-bodies we fly are 747s and L-1101s, the ones people like most," intones the announcer, as the child breaks into a smile. There is only one other wide body jet...

You Can't Win if You Don't Enter

Had trouble reaching Amtrak by phone? The reason, you probably thought, was a heavy volume of incoming calls caused by the energy situation. Certainly that is what we thought, until one day a few weeks ago when we were driving along, late to work, with our radio tuned to WWDC and heard the announcer on the phone congratulating a person, identified as an Amtrak employee, for winning a $1,000 contest sponsored by the Washington station. The Amtrak worker replied that he was particularly delighted to have won since so many of his colleagues had been talking about the contest and calling in their answers.

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The Great Federal Gravy Train Robbery

by Leonard Reed

It happens every year and 1979 was no exception. The time arrives for a federal pay raise to maintain "comparability" with salaries in the world of business. The amount of the increase is proposed by something called the President's Pay Agent—not a man with a green eyeshade, but a committee consisting of the director of the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), the director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), and the secretary of Labor. Unless the president acts to increase or reduce the recommended raise, it automatically goes into effect on October 1 of each year.

In 1979, the Pay Agent recommended an increase of 9.8 per cent. Mr. Carter, mindful of his own inflation guidelines and of an electorate grown increasingly impatient with the high cost of government, announced he would limit the raise to 5.5 per cent. The orchestrated protest that rose from the federal employee lobby has been matched in recent times only by the poignancy of Lee A. Iacocca's pleas for alms for Chrysler. "If federal workers are placed under mandatory wage controls for the second straight year," declared the Federal Employees Wage Council (consisting of the heads of the major employee unions), "the president will sound the death knell for the principle of comparability." Probably the most piteous cry came from Vincent J. Paterno, president of the Association of Civilian Technicians, who wrote, "This must stop before abject poverty becomes the mark of the average federal employee."

Carter, with less fanfare than accompanied his previous announcement, relented somewhat and set the raise at seven per cent. In fact, the seven per cent, plus the "in-grade" increases which virtually all federal workers receive, plus the additional pension benefits growing out of the raise, amounted to about an 11-percent increase—decidedly in excess of the guidelines. Nevertheless, the general impression left with the public was that fairness for the federal employees had been sacrificed to the necessity of setting an example of restraint. Even so seasoned an observer of the federal workforce as Mike Causey of *The Washington Post* referred to civil servants as being "held down. . . to raises less than a full catch-up with industry."

One figure that federal employee unions have been providing to friendly congressmen is that "88 per cent of federal white collar workers are paid up to 34 per cent less than private workers in comparable jobs." Even if one could untangle that syntax, any impression of civil servant impecuniosity that could be salvaged would be hard to reconcile with the data compiled in the July 1979 *Survey of Current Business,* which shows that in 1978, federal employees earned an average of $18,988 compared with an all-industry composite average of $13,275.

Officials of the OPM dismiss this comparison as an apples-and-oranges thing—the apples being working Americans at large and the oranges the federal force, which has a much higher component of professional and administrative personnel.

Leonard Reed is a contributing editor of The Washington Monthly.

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But the explanation is not totally satisfying. Since 1962, the great increase in federal programming has not been in research and development, where professionals dominate, but in routine payment programs such as welfare, social security, food stamps, salary and revenue-sharing disbursements, which require hives of clerical worker bees. Yet, during that same period, the superiority of the federal pay average over the all-industry average steadily increased from 27 per cent in 1962 to 47 per cent in 1978.

Back when men wore watch chains across their vests, compensation for federal employment was something less than lavish. But for several reasons, there was no dearth of candidates for civil service jobs. There were those who considered public service a more satisfying pursuit than the alternatives open to them. Others were attracted by the security government work offered. And there was the pension system which, although modest, was better than anything else around, and which was calculated to compensate for the probability that the civil servant was not going to be able to put aside much during his working life.

Somewhere along the line, all of that changed. By mid-century, government salaries had moved up substantially, although the average civil servant's pay remained modest enough to allow some room for envy of his private-sector counterpart. Erasing this remaining disparity became a respectable item of reform in the late 50s—who could oppose equal pay for equal work?—and in 1962, Congress formally established the principle of "comparability" between federal jobs and equivalent work in the business world.*

To put this comparability principle into effect, the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) was charged with designing annual surveys to provide information on salaries in the private sector for use as a yardstick against those in the federal service. Nobody apparently gave much thought to the fact that BLS is composed of government workers whose salaries would be directly affected by the results of the annual surveys—and that these results would be worked into a recommended scale of pay increases by other government people in what is now OPM. This is not to suggest any dishonest number-switching on the part of the officials concerned; it *is* to suggest a built-in bias that has ample room for expression in the arcane method by which "comparable" federal pay formulas are determined.

Job descriptions are the superheated air that lifts the federal pay balloon aloft.

Certainly, some of the oddities involved in the process of comparing federal and private pay bring to mind the story of the fellow who was asked, "How's your wife?" and replied, "Compared with whom?"

Ask an informed citizen who reads the newspapers and follows things like federal pay raises how "comparability" is established, and after a bit of thinking he might come up with something like this: "The government employs accountants. Accountants are employed in a variety of private industries. So I assume what happens is that a survey is made of the salaries paid accountants in industry. You include small and large firms, average them out, and you end up with a scale of average salaries, ranging from those paid starting accountants to those paid accountants in the more demanding and responsible positions. Then you use this scale to set up comparable salaries for government accountants in comparable positions. Yes?..."

No.

It doesn't work that way at all. "Comparability" does not mean that accoun-

*By 1969 federal salaries had, by the government's own arithmetic, caught up with pay in the private sector, leaving only the need for an annual adjustment to maintain equality.

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tants, engineers, editors, secretaries, and bottle-washers in government are paid on the basis of what their counterparts in industry earn. As one official of OPM put it, "We are not *trying* to see that a secretary at the GS-7 level has the same salary as a secretary in a business office who does essentially the same work."

Instead, the government compares federal to private jobs using a medium called the federal "job standard." "Job standards" are lists of criteria and responsibilities that purportedly describe the various grades in the civil service (federal employees are paid by the grade, a GS-12 writer getting the same as a GS-12 physicist). The current standards take up six to eight feet on a bookshelf and reveal, for example, that the assignments of a GS-9 management analyst are "relatively routine" but "require seasoned judgment," while a GS-14 analyst issues reports "of major significance to top agency and department administrators."

When BLS sallies forth into the private sector, it is these disembodied job standards that it compares with the people it finds. The theory is simple: If the job standards describe the level of skill and responsibility of a GS-14, all BLS has to do is find the private sector employees whose jobs match that same standard. Things equal to the same thing will be equal to each other.

But they are not equal. On the private side of the equation, BLS goes out and visits employees, observing their actual duties. On the government side, BLS conducts no on-the-scene investigations. Instead, what is matched to the job standards is that flight of the federal imagination known as the "job description."

"Job descriptions" are designed to provide the details on a particular post in the bureaucracy. When measured up against the broader, generic "standards," these job descriptions determine each federal employee's grade level. They are the superheated air that fills the balloon-like "standards" and lifts the federal pay structure aloft. Relatively few government workers have the responsibilities, make the kind of decisions, or exercise the latitude that their job descriptions attribute to them. The writing of the job description is a practiced art—and the higher the grade, the greater the scope for what one OPM official referred to as "journalistic freedom" in describing the alleged duties that justify a given level of pay. [See also "What's Wrong With the Civil Service," *The Washington Monthly*, April, 1977.] A GS-14 (of whom there are 55,000 in the federal realm) may spend his day leafing through old reports and looking out the window, but his job description says he has "extensive and frequent contacts with key officials and top management of the same and other establishments, other government agencies, State officials. . . private industry and other groups in an effort to resolve different viewpoints regarding key matters of management and organization"—in short, he could be relied on to fill in for Kurt Waldheim on a moment's notice. If you take what a job description *says* a federal manager does, and find someone in the private sector who *does* those things, you'll discover he has a high salary indeed.

A Lawyer in Every Pot

On top of this mirage, BLS has built an elaborate mechanism that further deprives the comparability process of any accountant-to-accountant simplicity. The federal version of comparability is based on something called the PATC survey—an acronym denoting a selected group of professional, administrative, technical, and clerical jobs in the private sector. The salaries of all the jobs at each level (as measured by the all-important "standards") are averaged together—accountants, attorneys, etc. at the GS-12 level going into one pot, those at the GS-11 level into another, and so on. On the basis of this series of statistical stews, BLS plots a "payline" for the private sector, running from GS-1 to GS-15. Invariably, when this payline is matched against the line that represents existing federal salaries, the private payline comes out running above the public one. The difference between the two determines the percentile increase OPM deems necessary to bring federal pay up to par.

The techniques used in this annual exercise, however, are seriously suspect. The process, according to BLS itself, is "surrounded by controversy because there is no single, generally accepted method of computing [the paylines]."

For starters, there is the question of which jobs are included in the PATC survey. You see, of the 436 white collar

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occupations listed in government work, only 22—representing about 23 per cent of the federal force—are "matched" in the survey of the private sector. Some civil service occupations are excluded simply because they have no counterparts in industry: IRS agents, customs inspectors, air traffic controllers, and the like. Other federal jobs, while having private counterparts, are not considered matchable by BLS. (Editors, for example, abound in both the public and private fields, but since important elements of the commercial editor's job, such as circulation-building or attracting advertisers, play no role in the federal editor's job, the two are not judged matchable.) Still more of the occupations are excluded simply because the statisticians have deemed that a less extensive survey can still yield a statistically sound result. "You want vegetables for dinner," explained one OPM official, "but do you want 50 of them? You have to settle for the smallest number that will give some balance to your diet."

. . . And Two Vegetables

But while the *number* of jobs surveyed may well be statistically adequate, when the number is as small as it is the *selection* of jobs to be surveyed can skew the private payline one way or another. It makes a big difference which vegetables you choose. And the GAO, in a 1973 report on the survey, noted that the jobs selected for PATC were not representative of the composition of federal jobs at several of the grade levels. "The job mixes at certain of those levels," the GAO noted, "contained disproportionate numbers of jobs which were highly paid in the private sector, which resulted in an upward bias of the average work level rates." For example, although 70 per cent of employees at Grade 5 were clerical, of the ten jobs surveyed at that level in the private sector, only one was clerical—which gave clerical work only a ten-percent influence on the outcome. Six of the survey jobs, on the other hand, were the higher-paying college graduate entry jobs; they represented less than one per cent of grade 5 employees, but had a 60-per-cent influence on that portion of the private payline. (In 1976, "weighted averages" were introduced into the process, belatedly offering a degree of correction.)

Similarly, at the loftier grade 15 level the only three jobs selected for surveying in the private sector were (and still are) attorney, engineer, and chemist—occupations that are among the highest paid in private industry. So, although over 76 per cent of GS-15s are *not* lawyers, engineers, or chemists, the salaries business pays for people in those three fields is the basis on which *all* GS-15 salaries are annually determined to be lagging behind salaries in the outside world. (Since the payline above the GS-15 level is determined not by survey but by "extrapolation," a cynic might suspect that those at the top who choose the occupations to be surveyed are no dummies.)

Further distorting the private "payline" is a series of limitations placed on the survey's scope that effectively eliminates from consideration the salaries of three fourths of all non-federal white collar workers.

By and large the minimum-sized manufacturing or retail establishment in which BLS will seek pay statistics employs 250 people. That cuts out of the survey the salaries paid in 96 per cent of manufacturing and 98 per cent of retail firms. The upward pressure this selection exerts on the payline can be seen from figures put out by a different office of the Bureau of Labor Statistics, which show how average weekly wages increase in direct proportion to the size of the employing firm. For the latest period compiled, the data show the average weekly wage in a firm employing three or fewer employees to be $158.13; for a 50 to 99 employee firm the figure is $193.50; and for a firm with more than 1,000 employees, the wage average is $267.80.

It is true, as government officials maintain, that large establishments frequently duplicate more precisely the jobs found in government. In the small enterprise, it seems, employees have a disorderly tendency to pitch in here and there with whatever task needs doing at the moment. "We go to a small business," explained an OPM official, "and find that the boss's secretary is somebody who not only types letters but also makes up the payroll. We have no jobs like that in the government." So the government paysetters turn to the big corporate hierarchies to locate work habits they find more familiar. But that

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doesn't make the resulting salary figures, based on the highest-paying two or three per cent of American business organizations, any more representative.

Also left out of the PATC survey are the employees of state and local governments, who have come to constitute 14 per cent of the working population of the United States. Their exclusion is mandated by law on the theory that local government salaries are administered rather than being a reflection of market forces. But in recent years, political pressures, if not market forces, have been exerting their influence—most notably in the tension between the public labor unions, which exercise increasing clout, and the resistance of the taxpayers of local jurisdictions, who feel the tangible connection between the salaries of public employees and the size of the tax bill. And federal salaries, it turns out, are substantially higher than those of any state except Alaska. An American Management Association survey puts the average salary of the mayor in cities of more than 200,000 population at $42,700—less than the average salary of the GS-15. The budget director in cities of that size averages $31,800—compared to the more than $50,000 salary of the chief budget officer in any federal agency. Commissioners of social services in large cities average $33,000—a salary exceeded by roughly 12,000 employees in HEW, our federal social service agency.

Piled on top of these rather glaring distortions in the official comparison of private and public wages are some sheer omissions: important elements of compensation that the government doesn't even *try* to compare.

Bledsoe's Bonus

One factor simply ignored in the comparability process is an intangible—job security. The worker or executive in the business world faces the prospect of salary loss from any of a number of causes: layoffs due to localized or widespread recession, performance considered unsatisfactory by his superiors, bankruptcy of his company, etc. None of these threatens the federal worker to any significant degree—surely a form of real, if hidden compensation. It doesn't however, show up on the comparative paylines. Additionally, the civil servant's protection against job loss because of poor performance completely removes from the comparability process the element of quality; it means that the pay of people who are capable of holding their jobs is being compared on equal terms with that of people who constitute a mix of the capable and the incompetent. (I find it difficult to get past this point without recalling an incident from my own service in the Voice of America at a time when John Chancellor had just been appointed the VOA director. Chancellor was taken with an idea he had for giving satellite weather reports to areas to which we were broadcasting. It was a complicated matter and he had asked a weather expert from NBC to come to Washington to help explore the problems. Chancellor, one of the highly-paid special assistants he had inherited (for our purposes, Bledsoe), the weatherman, and I sat at a small table. As the weather expert talked, Bledsoe, to Chancellor's silent mortification, kept dozing off. Bledsoe's head would fall forward, snapping his eyes open, and then be brought temporarily upright. Now, lots of people have the marvelous faculty of being able to cork off in a large, dull meeting. But the talent it takes to fall asleep when you are one of four people sitting around a table presided over by your boss was Bledsoe's particular genius. It is not a gift, however, avidly sought out or particularly

A federal employee who averaged $12,000 a year could see his retirement pay go above $30,000 this year.

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well paid in private industry.)

Beyond the year-by-year security federal employment offers to the competent and incompetent alike, there is the *ultimate* security: the fact that for the federal employee there is no longer *any* mandatory retirement age—he can go doddering into eternity at full pay, each year presenting him with a pay increase to bring him up to "comparability" with the private sector.

But if there is no legal requirement for the federal worker ever to retire, there is one hell of an incentive. The generosity of the benefits under the federal pension system is truly remarkable. Even more remarkable is that these benefits, also, are in no way included in the comparison of private and federal pay. This is so in spite of the fact that the Board of Actuaries of the Civil Service Retirement System has projected federal pension costs at 56 per cent of the payroll, a huge addition to the federal employees' deferred, but nonetheless real, compensation.

The pension of an employee in the private sector is most generally calculated as a percentage of his average earnings during all the years he was employed by the firm. Some of the more generous plans base the pension amount on his average earnings of the last five years, which, because of both seniority and inflation, can be expected to be his peak earning years. The pension of the federal white collar worker is based on his *highest three-year* average.

In addition, federal pensions, unlike most private pensions, are indexed to the cost of living to afford the retiree complete protection against inflation. A federal employee who averaged $12,000 a year over his 30 years of service and retired five years ago, age 55, at an annuity of $20,000 (based on his "high three") would see that annuity go above $30,000 this year. Assuming a modest five-percent inflation rate, by the end of his actuarial life 18 years from now he would have collected more than $1 million in pension money—almost three times as much as he earned during his entire working life. (Civil service employees argue that they, unlike most private employees, contribute to their retirement fund—seven-and-a-half per cent of their salary; in fact, an employee's entire contribution has been returned to him by the time he has been retired 18 or 19 months.)

Whether or not one considers federal pensions excessive, the importance of including these benefits in any valid pay comparison is hardly arguable. OPM officials point out that their omission is not a matter of negligence on their part. The 1970 revision of the pay comparability laws under which they operate speaks only of salaries. But the argument is a bit disingenuous: it overlooks the considerable influence of those same officials in the drafting of that law.

Let Sleeping GS-12 s Lie?

The Carter administration's proposed "pay reform" legislation, currently being contemplated in the congressional navel, calls for pay comparability to be based on "total compensation." Estimates of the potential savings to the taxpayers range from the administration's "$3 billion over the next several years" to the Chamber of Commerce's "immediate savings of $10-$14 billion." There is a big difference between those two estimates, and a substantial part of the difference has to do with retirement benefits. For it is unlikely that the administration will delve very deeply into the true cost of pension benefits—much of which is an unfunded liability. Even to make known the actual and projected costs would put the administration between the rock and the hard place—an enraged public on one hand, on the other a powerful federal employees' lobby, doggedly opposed to any linking of salary and benefits.

But no "pay reform" will endow the comparability process with a semblance of reality unless it takes into account the central fallacy on which the whole system now rests—the inflated "job descriptions" used in the matching of federal and private workers. As long as these job descriptions are taken seriously, BLS will be forever comparing the salaries of GS-14 report-readers with those of the field marshals of business.

OPM, which was carved out of the old Civil Service Commission last year, largely disclaims any responsibility for such "overgrading." Back before World War II, the Commission itself classified jobs throughout the federal system. But with the growth of the government during and after the war, responsibility for writing job descriptions in adherence to the "standards" was

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turned over to the individual agencies, where it became a wondrous thing.

In a series of random audits performed in a variety of federal agencies between 1976 and 1978, the Civil Service Commission (not the system's most severe critic) found that 11 per cent of federal jobs were overgraded. The percentage of overgrading was higher in the higher grades, reaching 26 per cent at Grade 13. In Grades 12 to 15, 40,798 jobs were overgraded; in dollar terms, these employees were being overpaid an average of $7,344 per year.

Lest these disturbing findings cause too much anxiety in the ranks, Civil Service director (now OPM director) Alan Campbell pointed out that it wasn't necessary to downgrade the overgraded employees. "Such action," he wrote, "is generally a last resort. Reassignments and adding duties are among available alternatives for managers." "Adding duties" usually amounts to beefing up a job description rather than changing the nature of the job.

At the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, one of the more egregious offenders, a three-year "correction program" was instituted. One instance may suffice as an example of what "reassignment" often means. A speechwriter's job was found to be overgraded and was reduced from a GS-15 classification to a GS-14. In order to protect the speechwriter against personal loss because of the error, he was moved into a GS-15 job that had become vacant in another part of HEW's hydra-headed public affairs domain. His grade secure, he was then "detailed" back to his old job, where he is again happily writing speeches.

The Best Compensation

The notion that government pay is low and needs to be boosted if we are to attract quality people to serve is periodically given new support by presidential pay commissions. Typically, these commissions consist of prominent citizens (Nelson Rockefeller headed the last one) who appear to the public to be neutral and authoritative figures. They are, in fact, busy people, dependent on the career civil servants who do the commissions' real work and greatly influence the conclusions. Plans nurtured for years within the bureaucracy—such as the recently established Senior Executive Service—emerge as "reforms" endorsed by these commissions. Inevitably, the commissions also recommend sharply increased pay, particularly for the elite class of civil servants who help shape the recommendations.

From time to time these recommendations are given credence in the public mind by newspaper accounts of a high government official who is returning to the presidency of the college he left, or to the executive board of his corporation, because he can't get along on his $50-$60,000 government salary. ("I've decided that it would be unfair of me to ask my family to sacrifice any further," is the usual quote.) Unreported, because they are not newsworthy, are the multitudes of equally qualified applicants who scramble after the vacated job. But it is they and not the vacator (who may be leaving for any of a variety of reasons which he ennobles with his duty-to-family statement) who reflect what the government has to offer in its competition with industry for talented people.

Although it is the exception rather than the rule, many government officials—particularly at the cabinet and sub-cabinet level—are paid less than people carrying like responsibilities in business or industry. That is no national tragedy. The prospect of high pay is hardly the best motivation for public service. Unless he is something of a clod, an assistant secretary of the Treasury is likely to find it a lot more rewarding to concern himself with controlling inflation or bolstering the dollar on the international market than to ponder, as he did when he was a V.P. at the First National Bank of Omaha, whether to approve a mortgage loan for Millie Plotkin. The assistant secretary who can't get along on his $60,000 salary may not be too well attuned to the public he is there to serve, and it's a fair bet that the public interest will not be mortally injured by his departure from government.

Still, although "comparability" cannot—and should not—be achieved in every government post, by any fair comparison the bulk of civil servants are far better compensated than the general public for whom they work. If comparability is to be achieved, it will require not an upward but a downward revision of government compensation. That's not likely to happen as long as the federal pay machine is designed and operated by the payees. ■

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Who's Who in the Carter Administration

When we report nominations like some of those below, we weep for the Republic. That was not the case when Carter appointed **Michael Pertschuk** as chairman of the Federal Trade Commission and **Alfred Dougherty** as head of its Bureau of Competition. They are two of the better men in the government, and they have, as we expected, actually tried to do something. That, of course, has doomed them to attack—some of it reasonable (as we hope ours was in our December issue), some of it expressing the views of the most vulgar sell-outs in Washington. The latter are making headway in their attacks because they have found themselves a respectable front in the current sentiment against regulation. But you should know that they are trying to protect the insurance companies, the doctors, the dentists, the lawyers, and the undertakers who rob you—and of course those lovely people in the advertising and cereal industries who have dedicated themselves to rotting your children's teeth. . . .

In

WHITE HOUSE

Special White House Assistant for Ethnic Affairs—**Stephen Aiello** has been president of the New York City Board of Education.

Congressional Relations Director, Office of Management and Budget—**James Morrison, Jr.** has been assistant director for economics and government.

COMMERCE

Associate Deputy Secretary—**Charles Ravenel**, an investment banker, was defeated for a Senate seat by Strom Thurmond last year, having previously won the Democratic nomination for governor of South Carolina, only to have it taken away by a court decision.

Deputy Undersecretary for International Trade—**Donald Furtado** has been director of trade reorganization for the department and, before that, a senior vice president of the Export-Import Bank of the United States.

Assistant Secretary for International Economic Policy—**Abraham Katz** has been deputy assistant secretary.

Deputy Assistant Secretary for Textiles and Apparel—**Paul O'Day** has been deputy director of the Bureau of Domestic Business Development.

Deputy Assistant Secretary for Import Administration—**John Greenwald** has been deputy general counsel at the office of the Special Trade Representative for trade negotiations.

General Counsel—**Homer Moyer** has been counselor to the Secretary and was previously deputy general counsel.

DEFENSE

Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Manpower, Reserve Affairs, and Installations—**Joseph Zengerle III** has been a lawyer with the firm of Shea, Gardner in Washington, D.C.

Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Manpower, Reserve Affairs, and Logistics—**Joseph Doyle** has been a lawyer with Shearman, Sterling in New York.

EDUCATION

Senior Advisor to the Secretary on Transition—**Dr. Lisle Carter** is the president of the University of the District of Columbia.

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Director of Public Affairs for Transition—**Liz Carpenter,** was press secretary for Lady Bird Johnson.

Director of Implementation for Organization—**Richard Beattie**, HEW general counsel under Joseph Califano, has been a lawyer with the firm of Simpson, Thatcher, and Bartlett.

Commissioner of Education—**William Smith** has been director of the Teacher Corps. This position will be abolished when reorganization becomes effective later this year.

ENERGY

Assistant Secretary for Conservation and Solar Energy—**Thomas Stelson** has been vice president for research and professor of civil engineering at the Georgia Institute of Technology.

Assistant Secretary for International Affairs—**Leslie Goldman** has most recently been the principal deputy assistant secretary for international affairs.

Director of the Office of Energy Research—**Edward Frieman** has been deputy director of Princeton's physics laboratory.

HEALTH AND HUMAN RESOURCES

Commissioner of the Administration for Children, Youth, and Families—**John Calhoun** is a former commissioner of the Massachusetts Youth Services Department.

JUSTICE

Counselor to the Attorney General—**Victor Kramer** has been the director of the Institute for Public Interest Representation at the Georgetown University Law Center.

LABOR

Deputy Undersecretary for International Affairs—**Dean Clowes** has been director of the international affairs department of the United Steelworkers of America.

Deputy Assistant Secretary for Policy, Evaluation, and Research—**Jodie Allen,** who has been special assistant to the Secretary, will coordinate research and evaluation of employment training and income maintenance programs.

STATE

Undersecretary for Security Assistance, Science and Technology—**Matthew Nimetz** has been counselor to the department since 1977.

Director, Arms Control and Disarmament Agency—**Ralph Earle II** was chairman of the U.S. delegation to the SALT negotiations.

TREASURY

Director, Bureau of Industrial Economics—**Beatrice Vaccara** has been acting deputy assistant secretary for economic affairs.

Special Counsel on International Taxation, Internal Revenue Service—**Richard Gordon** has been with the Washington offices of the New York law firm of White & Case.

Deputy International Tax Counsel and Deputy Director of the International Tax Affairs Office—**Joel Rabinovitz** has been a professor at the University of California at Los Angeles Law School.

AGENCIES AND COMMISSIONS

Consumer Product Safety Commission
Associate Executive Director for Communications—**Kenneth Rashid** has been acting director of communications.

Federal Energy Regulatory Commission
Director of the Opinions and Reviews Office—**Bernard Wexler** has been an assistant to the special projects counsel of the Securities and Exchange Commission.

Federal Trade Commission
Associate Director for Planning Management, Bureau of Consumer Protection—**Steven Kelman** is on leave as an assistant professor of public policy at the Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University.

Interstate Commerce Commission
Deputy Director of the Rates Section—**Richard Felder** has been a legal assistant to Commissioner Betty Jo Christian.

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International Trade Commission
Chairman—Commissioner **Catherine Bedell** will finish the unexpired term of Joseph Parker.

Commissioners—**Robert Baldwin** is a former chairman of the University of Wisconsin economics department and has been a consultant to the World Bank; **Michael Calhoun** has been assistant minority counsel for international trade for the House Ways and Means Committee.

Merit Systems Protection Board
Special Counsel—**Thomas H. Henderson** has been chief of the public integrity section of the Justice Department's criminal division.

Postal Service
Senior Assistant Postmaster General for Operations—**Neil Benson** has been Chief Postal Inspector.

Chief Postal Inspector—**Kenneth Fletcher** has been Chief Postal Inspector for the Western Region.

Securities and Exchange Commission
Director of the Market Regulation Division—**Douglas Scarff** has been associate director.

Out

Commerce
Deputy Undersecretary of the Regional Affairs Office—**Frederick Schenck** has resigned to become a senior vice president of Resorts International Hotel, Atlantic City.

Defense
Undersecretary of the Navy—**James Woolsey** has resigned to return to private law practice in Washington with the firm of Shea and Gardner.

Education
Executive Deputy Commissioner for Resources and Operations—**James Pickman** will enter private law practice.

Energy
Administrator of the Economic Regulatory Administration—**David Bardin** will stay on as consultant.

Assistant Secretary for International Affairs—**Harold Bergold** is preparing to become Ambassador to Hungary.

Assistant Secretary for Conservation and Solar Energy—**Omi Walden** is now advisor to the Secretary for conservation and solar energy.

Health and Human Resources
Commissioner of the Administration for Children, Youth and Families—**Blandina Cardenas Ramirez** has resigned.

State
Undersecretary for Security Assistance, Science and Technology—**Lucy Bensen** has resigned.

Director of the Office of Assistant Secretary of International Affairs—**Ray Furst** has resigned.

Agencies and Commissions

Arms Control and Disarmament Agency
Director—**George Seignious** has announced his resignation. He will serve as an advisor to the government on arms control, with the rank of ambassador-at-large.

Federal Energy Regulatory Commission
Director of the Enforcement Office—**Sheila Hollis** has resigned.

Food and Drug Administration
Deputy Commissioner—**Sherwin Gardner** will become vice president for science and technology of the Grocery Manufacturers of America, Inc.

Interstate Commerce Commission
Commissioner—**Betty Jo Christian** has announced that she will not seek reappointment and will become a partner in the Washington law firm of Steptoe & Johnson.

Merit Systems Protection Board
Special Counsel—**Patrick Swygert** has resigned to return to the Temple University Law School.

National Labor Relations Board
Member—**Betty Murphy** has resigned.

Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Chairman—**Joseph Hendrie** was dismissed by President Carter on December 7, 1979, but will remain as a commissioner. Commissioner John Ahearne is now chairman.

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Memo of the Month

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

Memorandum

DATE: June 25, 1979

TO: All Employees

FROM: Director (00)

SUBJ: Safety Violation

I have recently observed employees walking around in stocking feet or barefoot. This is a safety violation which can not be condoned. Employees are required to wear appropriate foot wear at all times while on the job.

Supervisors will be expected to fully enforce this requirement.

H. L. KUYPER

Buy U.S. Savings Bonds Regularly on the Payroll Savings Plan

VA FORM 2108
JAN 1977

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Tales from the Bore War

Speak to me of infrastructures. . .

by Walter Shapiro

Lawrence Simons began to speak:

"It's a great pleasure for me to appear before you tonight—"

Settle back, boys, long night ahead.

"—to talk about rehabilitation and its beneficial effects on the existing stock of housing in this country."

Cute waitress over there.

"Rehab, of course, offers a sound alternative in many situations to new construction—"

Like to get my hands on the clown who designed these chairs.

"—and it makes efficient use of the existing infrastructure supporting treated buildings."

Hnnnnnnhhhh?

Three meals a day, five maybe six days a week, two hundred and some-odd days out of the year, in Washington and in each of the great states and in many of the territories, at conventions and convocations and conferences great and small, they are out there—competing for attention with the creamed peas, and spreading the good word about the existing infrastructure and the unswerving commitment. In Maine among the Yankees it was once considered important to "speak only when you can improve on silence." In the politics of Washington the rules are different; if you speak for the administration—Carter's or any other—you will speak whenever the invitations come in, wherever the White House wants you to go, you will speak on the beaches and in the hills and the towns, you will never surrender. . . .

This is mass communication with a difference—the difference being the *measurable mass* of speeches piled on top of each other (how else will the White House know we're doing our job?), and *critical mass* being the moment when every available speaker is talking simultaneously to indifferent listeners all across America. Today this may be only a theoretical concept, but in an election year the theory will not be far from fact. For the equation to be complete, you must have a speaker with little or nothing to say and no particular enthusiasm for saying it, and, on the other side of the rostrum, two or more people who have invited the speaker to address them but have no interest in listening. In politics, these chain reactions take place every day.

Lawrence Simons, one of the many

Walter Shapiro, who survived a tour of duty as a speechwriter for Labor Secretary Ray Marshall, is a contributing editor of The Washington Monthly.

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assistant secretaries at the Department of Housing and Urban Development, was the featured speaker at the National Housing Conference in Washington last November 20, and his speech serves admirably to illustrate the process. It wasn't really terrible. It wasn't great. What it was, was typical.

It had the mandatory "pleasure-to-be-here" opener, the tip-off that Simons's speechwriter had long since given up looking for fresh anecdotes and was in a hurry to get home. It had the necessary jargon—"rehab"—demonstrating that Simons was one of the boys. It had the reluctance to make a flat assertion: "...offers a sound alternative *in many situations.*" And it had "the existing infrastructure supporting treated buildings."

Simons maintained a consistent style throughout. There were references to HUD programs: "Section 312 and Section 23b—especially Project Rehab—demonstrated that federal efforts could target rehabilitation to renewal or revitalization areas." There were statements of the Extreme Obvious: "New housing is costly to build... land is costly and frequently hard to find." And there were the requisite arcane statistics: "NSA cities reserved 18,900 units, mostly sub-rehab, in FY 1979."

It seems safe to say that when Simons sat down, the world was very much the same as when he stood up. No new programs had been announced. No new information had been conveyed. No one would long remember what he had said,

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nor would he have been able to repeat it later if asked. But it seems equally safe to say that he went to bed exhausted that night, as did his listeners, and that they all slept the sleep of the just. That, too, is part of the process: the sense that speechmaking is hard but, God knows, a necessary part of government.

In June 1979 the U.S. Conference of Mayors, assembled in Pittsburgh, learned that "housing is where people live." This was the message brought to them from Washington by HUD undersecretary Jay Janis. An international gathering of female architects, meeting in Seattle last October, learned from HUD assistant secretary Donna Shalala that "my office is concerned with housing. After food, housing is the single most pressing need for any individual." Later in the same speech, Shalala—who has since been named president of Hunter College—advised her audience that HUD was spending its time "looking for a non-sexist city." The record will show that this remark was not greeted with raucous laughter, catcalls, Bronx cheers. Buried in the creamed peas, hardly anyone even noticed.

Bland indifference is vitally important to the perpetuation of the speechmaking syndrome. If anyone ever emerged from the anaesthesia induced by the speeches, the rubber chicken, and the overheated meeting rooms, and actually thought hard for a moment, it would become clear that speech-writing and speech-delivering are more than just another growth industry in Washington. Bring all the writers and talkers and ancillary personnel together in one room and you would have the equivalent of a middle-size federal agency. Lay them end to end and they would reach to Dubuque and back, as they often do. Add up their salaries, their travel expenses, their research costs and their Xerox bills, and you would have a figure larger than the gross national product of a respectable Third World nation. You will never do these exercises, of course; the Society of Spokespersons is counting on that. But just suppose you tried:

Begin with a cabinet secretary like Ray Marshall, who averages 50 to 75 speeches a year. Multiply that by 13 cabinet officers and you get 910 speeches. Throw in the 15 White House aides who will go anywhere to talk to anyone sitting still (Sarah Weddington and Esther Peterson are legendary travelers) and you have another 750 appearances. Then there are 180 people like Lawrence Simons—obscure assistant secretaries and deputies and unders who comprise the sub-cabinet ranks. Put each of them down, conservatively, for 25 speeches a year; that gives you another 4,500 appearances. Add these all together and you get a grand total of 6,160 speeches a year by representatives of the administration—*27.4 speeches a day* (assuming a five-day week).

What can we say about the costs associated with this phenomenon? Here, alas, the data are slippery. It's hard to assign a specific cost to a speechwriter who, armed with scissors and a modest imagination, cuts and pastes paragraphs from old speeches into a random pattern suitable for a Shalala. Are these one-time costs, redundant costs—and how do you factor in the effects of the Consumer Price Index? Hard to say—we may need another tablecloth to work this one out. Let's just settle for the very reasonable assumption that each speech requires a minimum of three person-hours to prepare at a median cost of $17.75 per hour (methodology available on request) including fringe benefits but exclusive of travel. Now assume that the average speech involves 200 miles of travel at 25 cents a mile and eight hours of the speaker's time at $20 an hour. If you have your calculator with you, you will promptly see that without even attempting to quantify a whole range of related costs (Xerox, phone, Venus No. 2 pencils) we already have a program budgeted at $1,621,620. While that may not seem like much more than the cost overrun of a single GSA filing cabinet, keep in mind that we have not yet attempted to estimate all the costs associated with assembling everyone who has to *hear* the speeches. We have nothing to report in this area because our accountants are in Omaha listening to Bob Bergland.

The Three-Martini Speech

Why do groups voluntarily subject themselves to the paralyzing boredom that is almost invariably the sole product of speeches by public officials? And why do public officials accept these invitations, exposing themselves to the horrors of

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gastric distress and the nausea induced by laboring through the prose produced by their writers?

Part of the answer can be found in one of the great success stories of American capitalism in the 1970s. The steel industry may be flat on its back, Chrysler may be taking a long count, but the convention industry has seasoned analysts agog. Talk about growth—in convention centers like Washington, new hotel construction can barely keep pace with the escalating demand for conferences. It is axiomatic that at every conference there is a rostrum, and behind that rostrum there must be someone moving his lips and making sounds.

At a time when torpor permeates the boardrooms and cubicles of corporate America, management must provide more and more perquisites to keep its people content. No perk is more cherished than the opportunity to spend an expense-paid week gamboling in New Orleans, San Francisco, Las Vegas, Miami Beach. What the hell, even Cleveland looks good compared to staying at your desk burrowing through printouts. The benevolent corporation rewarding its workers rewards itself at the same time, by writing off these conferences as tax-deductible expenses of doing business.

There is only one hitch. The Internal Revenue Service will accept the tax deduction only if business is actually conducted at the conference. This requirement can be met without strain by loading the conference agenda with breakfast meetings, lunchtime symposia, and happy-hour seminars. Someone has to be found to speak at each of these get-togethers, and nowhere is there a larger reservoir of spokespeople than in the federal government. With any luck, one phone call does it all—gets you your speaker and establishes plausibility with the IRS.

But we do not endure speeches for guilt and the IRS alone. Indeed, our willingness to be benumbed may have as much to do with taking money from the Treasury as with avoiding payment to it.

Suppose, for example, that we are members of the National Housing Conference. Lawrence Simons may have nothing to tell us, and we may not want to listen, but we are mightily pleased that he has honored us with his presence, because we need him. What we do *not* need is some maverick in Washington who might some day take a hard look at the sub-rehab infrastructure and discover swarms of consultants and self-styled urban-revitalizers playing games with government grants. We do not need that. We need friends in Washington; we want Lawrence Simons to like us; we want to shake his hand and tell him he is doing a grand job; we may even listen to him, on the off chance that he will reveal clues as to how we might better phrase our grant applications to take maximum advantage of the latest HUD offerings.

A Capitolist Tool

The search for friends in Washington is as old as the republic, and it works to the mutual advantage of searchers and searchees. This is one of the key advantages of membership in Congress. In fact, it may be safely assumed that whatever the undersecretaries of Washington know about the creamed-peas circuit, they learned from Capitol Hill.

Here again, you must pause briefly to doodle some numbers on the tablecloth in order to appreciate the dimensions of the speechmaking structure. If we simply assume that the 535 members of the House and Senate make four speeches a month—a laughably conservative estimate—we have added 25,680 speeches a year to the executive branch's 6,160. Groups like to corral congressmen to their conventions, for the obvious reason that congressmen vote on matters of importance—like whether to subsidize another study of another infrastructure—and congressmen like to accept, for the obvious reason that they get paid. Many senators collect $2,000 per speech—not as good as Bob Hope, but perfectly respectable. Not quite so respectable is the fact that they often collect these fees from people about whom they are supposed to remain objective and impartial.

In a momentary shudder of zeal brought on by Watergate, the Senate voted in 1977 to cut back the limit on the amount of outside income its members could receive for such speeches—from $25,000 a year to $8,625. This was to take effect in 1979. Senate Majority Leader Robert Byrd supported the change, noting that

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"public confidence in this body" had been diminished by the persistent appearance of conflict of interest. The Senate's integrity was at stake, he said, when "business interests, unions, or other pressure groups affected by legislation pay extremely large sums of money for a short speech by a senator."

These were strong words. The reform seemed certain to become an important protector of congressional virtue. But then in 1978 Senator Byrd became one of six senators to earn the maximum $25,000 still allowable under the old law. In 1979, he voted to leave the old law—with the $25,000 maximum—intact.

Representatives of the executive branch are not permitted to accept fees for their speaking engagements. Thus they are stripped of the kind of direct financial incentive that propels congressmen hither and yon and keeps Capitol Hill speechwriters working late on the immortal words that their patron will utter tomorrow to the New England Knitted Outerwear Association. But administration spokespeople have a range of incentives of their own, and when it comes time to reform, they follow the path of Senator Byrd.

"... The importance of our programs is underscored by the Secretary's commitment to appear personally at, or send representatives to, important conferences across the country...."

—PRESS RELEASE

Every four years the principal incentive is obvious. If they don't get the president re-elected, they don't keep their jobs. Between elections there are many occasions when the incentive is equally obvious; the secretary of Labor speaks to the AFL-CIO to reassure workers that the administration really does care about them, and on the same day the secretary of Commerce tells the Business Roundtable that the administration will never forget the sacrifices made by corporations—and so on. The objective of these exercises is to keep wolves of whatever persuasion away from the door. That's clear enough. But there are times when the wolves are at bay, and *still* we find the airports jammed with speakers en route to yet another remote rostrum. Why?

- *Speak or Else:* Another meeting of the inter-agency coordinating committee on urban policy (or any other policy) is drawing to a close in the Roosevelt Room of the White House. Representatives from 23 different federal agencies have just given reports on what they are doing to advance the president's legislative goals. Since 17 of the 23 agency representatives have little or nothing to do with urban policy, the presentations have been a bit thin on substance. Everyone wants to go home. People are shuffling papers, stuffing briefcases, looking out the window at the fading winter light. Wait. What is the senior White House aide saying?

"... letter from the League of Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area Comptrollers about their meeting next month in

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Fargo. We'll need to send seven administration speakers—and they need people for panel discussions. I hardly need to tell you how important the comptrollers are. I have a list of the cabinet secretaries, assistant secretaries, and other people we'd like to go to Fargo. . . ."

The tenor of the announcement is unmistakable and presents everyone in the room with a Hobson's Choice: either waste a day in Fargo or antagonize the White House. Not surprisingly, a full complement of administration luminaries will soon be found at the Ozark Airlines counter in Chicago, waiting for a plane change to Fargo.

• *Travel:* Although accepting fees is forbidden, government speakers will be reimbursed for travel expenses. Fargo may not be high on anybody's travel preference list, but when an invitation arrives to speak to a group in Santa Fe or Tampa or San Francisco, who can refuse? By now, most convention planners know how to schedule things so that the government speaker can get his remarks out of the way on Thursday night. Perhaps he meets with some of the delegates at breakfast on Friday. After that, the weekend is wide open; when he goes back to Washington on Monday, the Treasury will pick up the entire travel tab, no questions asked.

• *Ego:* Quick, name four assistant secretaries in the Commerce Department. If you think these people are anonymous now, consider how obscure they were before being tapped for high office. Suddenly, the Association of Synthetic Fur Exporters wants to name the assistant secretary Man of the Year. What about the fact that the furriers are trying to get federal help in their struggle against market encroachment by Botswana? Does this trouble the assistant secretary? Probably not. "I was invited," he thinks to himself, "because word of my charm, my wit, my eloquence and my great record in administering Title 607(d)(3) has spread across an entire continent." He rings for his secretary. "That convention in Seattle—you know, the one where they want to give me that award—let them know I'll be there."

• *Sure Beats Working:* Government officials tend to burn out after about 18 months. Whatever zeal there was in the beginning has long since been replaced by a vast sense of futility. The very sight of the office in the morning is a painful reminder that the problems are never resolved and the meetings never end. If you can't make the problems go away, the only alternative is to make *yourself* go away—and nothing is more welcome for that purpose than the out-of-town speaking engagement. It's certainly better than getting caught slipping out to afternoon movies.

• *Speeches Are Hard Work:* This is the flip side of "Sure Beats Working." It's widespread in Washington. At about the same time he burns out, the assistant secretary gets the idea that making speeches is, itself, important work. Lawrence Simons may well have believed that speaking to the National Housing Conference provided a unique opportunity to educate citizens on the intricacies of the administration's urban rehabilitation programs, and Donna Shalala may have been convinced that her notion of non-sexist cities represented a major conceptual breakthrough for the women's movement. It's easy to be cynical about the motivations of government officials, but what you find, close up, is that they are often entirely sincere even in the pursuit of goals that seem entirely worthless to the rest of us.

How else to explain satisfactorily the passion of many White House officials—Anne Wexler springs to mind as a prime example—for endlessly distributing "speech inserts" to top-rank appointees? Inter-agency task forces often seem to do almost nothing beyond drafting, revising, and distributing "speech inserts"—thoroughly masticated cuds of hard information about soft programs. The end product of this process is that people like Patricia Harris suddenly start speaking about the windfall profits tax.

The speaker may know nothing about the subject encompassed by the speech insert. Ordinarily nobody in the audience will ask a question; instead, there will be polite applause. Over time, the speaker absorbs the idea that people are actually listening and that he is doing the real work of government by speaking to them. "Well, it was a hell of a hard day," he tells his wife on the phone that night. "I had to speak to 300 botanists, and I'm bushed."

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• *The Understudy:* One of the perils of serving as a subordinate is to be next in line when the boss decides not to go. This happens all the time. A cabinet secretary who has been bullied by the White House into speaking at a remote conclave will take careful soundings to determine—as the day approaches—whether anyone at the White House still cares. If the signals are ambiguous, the secretary sighs with relief and sends a deputy. Anyone who has attended more than two conferences has had the experience of waiting to hear from one of the big guns of the administration, only to realize at the last minute that the vaguely adolescent-looking individual at the head table—the man who doesn't look quite right in a three-piece suit—will be substituting for the star. The line is always essentially the same:

"The Secretary has asked me to convey to you his profound personal regret that he could not be here. As you know, he was looking forward to a reunion with his many warm personal friends here in Anchorage, but just as he was on his way to the airport,

(a) the White House asked him to meet with the president about the crisis in Ulan Bator;

(b) the airport got fogged in;

(c) his speechwriter quit. . . ."

The deputy then proceeds to demonstrate that he has not had time to look at the speech in advance, and that his Xerox copy is badly smudged. The creamed peas grow cold while he wrestles with the remains of the secretary's ringing rhetoric.

• *Looking Out for Number One:* Washington is a city where job mobility is a way of life. No one wants to be found among the group of 75 hapless former-assistant-secretaries wandering around jobless after a change of administrations. The resourceful government official always has a weather eye peeled for the right contact who will come through with the right offer at the right time—from the law firm, the university, or the foundation—to help make the transition from public to private life painless and, if possible, financially stimulating.

By the same token, the shrewd spokesman approaches different speaking engagements with different degrees of conscientiousness. It's one thing to go to Fargo, but an invitation to address the Aspen Institute on "Geopolitical Aspects of Global Interdependence in the 1980s" calls for rigorous preparation. Sipping sherry in the Rockies with the high priests of both the profit and non-profit world, the artful assistant secretary can make the kind of contacts that will pay handsome dividends later. And a government lawyer, asked to address an American Bar Association conference, knows that a handsomely-crafted address worthy of a law review is the best way to let the world know he is partnership material.

Fulsome Prison Blues

Each year, the speech department at a major university should host the Brock Adams Lecture. A prominent government official would be invited, and introduced with fulsome praise. He would then stand mute before the entire auditorium for 30 minutes, after which he would sit down to thunderous applause.

This yearly ritual would commemorate Adams's declaration, upon being appointed secretary of Transportation, that he would give no speeches during his first six months in office. If Secretary Adams did nothing else worthwhile—and indeed that appears to have been the case—his initial reluctance to participate in the great charade of government oratory stands as a shining example to those who would end the charade. Unfortunately, no serious reform seems likely, because no one would write the speech advocating it. ■

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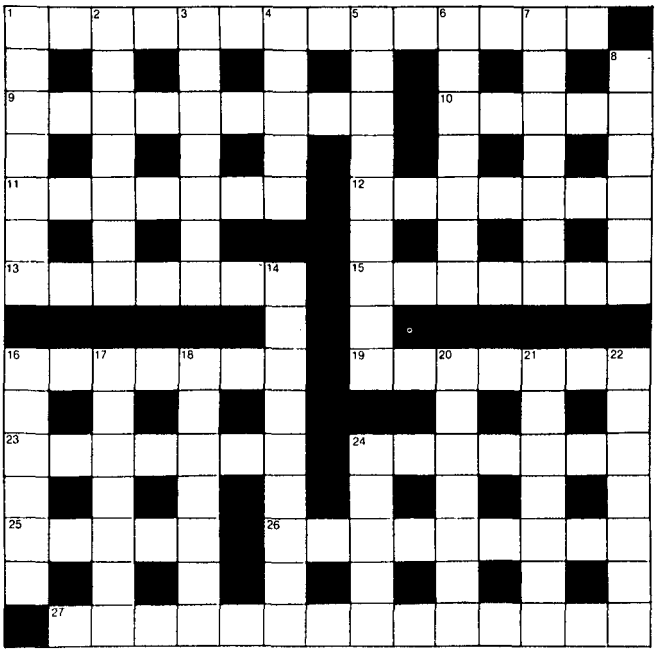
the political puzzle

by John Barclay



The numbers indicate the number of letters and words, e.g., (2,3) means a two-letter word followed by a three-letter word. Groups of letters, e.g., USA, are treated as one word.

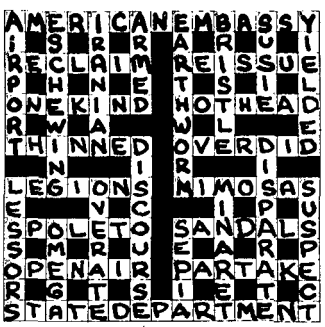
Across

1 Yet thine engine turned, just started. (8,6)
9 Mythical land uncovered at air ruin. (9)
10 Fares for legislators? (5)
11 Intelligence group in current as trees are formed. (7)
12 Get work in poet era. (7)
13 It's shaky when you put history in thus. (7)
15 Comes back for strange rawness. (7)
16 Crazy pet puss increases. (5,2)
19 Ace sped around and got away. (7)
23 Violent play of its card. (7)
24 Make fabrics from pin slop. (7)
25 Banish to old island? (5)
26 Chief wields a baton pan. (3,6)
27 Ale near one city mixed for 1 Across, for example. (2,8,4)

Down

1 Invaders of England fell in with Eleanor Mansfield. (7)
2 Found salvation in van in wild rain. (7)
3 It tilts around champion. (7)
4 Stoves with which the French keep their health up. (5)
5 Reap a vote carelessly and it will disappear. (9)
6 Sleds go somehow without faith. (7)
7 When young, Gene ate oddly. (4-3)
8 The ones to show the way around rushes. (6)
14 It's excellent when Capote is arranged in 199. (9)
16 Ike in the sun is quick. (6)
17 Neat oil production brings happiness. (7)
18 Poetess who can get along? (7)
20 Make leader pan Act 1 violently. (7)
21 VIP rate arranged for the Army's lowest. (7)
22 Praised uncontrolled unhappiness. (7)
24 Soft drink down the twisted pipes. (5)

Answers to last month's puzzle:



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Richard Reeves on political books

Haynes Johnson of *The Washington Post* has written a book on the first three years of the Carter administration and it's enough to make you give up political writing. It's called *In The Absence of Power,* to be published by Viking in April. Very thorough, often perceptive, it leaves Jimmy Carter for dead.

Which he was when the reporting was finished in the fall of 1979. The book must have gone into galleys the day before American diplomats were seized in Iran and Carter became, for a time at least, the hero of the West. The dangers of the trade, of course, are such that the president may be moribund again by the time these words see print. Maybe we should all go into something real, like cabdriving.

All that is not to say that the book is not valuable. Johnson does more than record presidential poll ratings. His indictment of Carter—and that's what the book is—is more substantial than anything Gallup does. He concludes that Carter failed:

"Three years after his election I see a capital more cynical, a country more disaffected, a political system more incapable of responding even to day-to-day crises, to say nothing of long-range planning. If attitudes about public service have improved, in or out of government, I can't detect them, and obviously anger with Washington has risen. For his Presidency to create such disillusionment after so much effort—and promise—is dismaying. Whether Carter wins renomination and reelection becomes insignificant beside those larger concerns."

In The Absence of Power also reveals the absence of memory most of us have. The lessons of the Lance affair. Or Carter, talking with Haynes Johnson in September 1978, saying, in paraphrase, "He had been disturbed when he sat in his White House office and listened to Soviet foreign minister Andrei Gromyko lie outright: Soviet generals were not operating in Ethiopia, East German forces were not

Richard Reeves is the author of Convention. *His column is a regular feature of* The Washington Monthly.

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fomenting trouble in Angola, Gromyko had said to his face—although Carter knew, from unquestionably accurate intelligence, that those statements were false." I read that on the day—in December 1979—when Carter was telling ABC that his perception of the Soviets had been drastically altered because he realized that Leonid Brezhnev had lied to him about Afghanistan.

But within the book about Carter and his men there is another book fighting to get out. A book about Washington, how it is, how it works. That book, a better book, I think, shows through when Johnson is writing in the first person about how he has spent his days, or in chapters entitled "The Government" and "The City."

Some of those pages made me homesick (I moved out in September, 1978) about missing the meetings at the White House, the casual access to senators and sources while wandering through the Capitol or along Connecticut Avenue, living in a town, the town, where government and journalism exist to serve each other. Visiting, even frequently, is not the same. You have to live there to know, and someone should write a book about that. The hell with Jimmy Carter—the town doesn't change.

It really doesn't, as Johnson found when he looked at *The Washington Post* for the week he arrived in August of 1957. "To reread the newspapers," he writes, ". . . is to find an eerie similarity in the news: the House is delaying for one year a bill on natural-gas regulation, senators are looking into a bribery story, Congress is debating 'small' and 'relatively clean' nuclear weapons, the President is worrying about spending pressures on his budget, a Congressional committee is voting higher postal rates, the Post Office is promising a scheme to speed the mails, Bob Hope is opening a five-day engagement, scientists are testing a cancer-detection machine, the news organizations are talking about prospects of opening bureaus in Mainland China. And Walter Lippmann, everyone's wise man, is pontificating thus: 'What we are now saying to the Russians and they are saying to us about. . . China, the Middle East and disarmament is said without any expectation that it might lead to an agreement.'"

And the Redskins, the Redskins, the Redskins.

There are also glimpses of the invisible Washington. The people you never meet—no one, to my knowledge, has ever met bureaucrats and lobbyists able, or willing, to explain precisely what they do for a living—who handle paper and interests. These were two of several excerpts I loved:

"In the flowering of the New Deal, Congress passed a law. Truckers were prohibited from driving more than ten hours a day. . . tired drivers are more likely to make mistakes that increase the risks for all citizens using the highways. Solution: regulate the hours they operate. . . . The trucker's daily log was created. Every fifteen minutes, every working day, truckers were required to jot down their activities. . . a federal form was prepared to help them fill out their logs. . . . A team of federal inspectors was created, charged with keeping watch over the truckers' daily logs. . . . By the time Jimmy Carter came to Washington, 1 billion 200 million pieces of paper were being filled out each year for the truckers' daily logs. . . ."

"An internal memo from one Washington trade association (the Carpet & Rug Institute) representative to his individual corporate clients three months after Carter took office was revealing: 'Every aspect of government affects the carpet industry. There is no agency of government, whether the Federal Trade Commission, the Consumer Protection Agency, the Justice Department, the White House Office of Consumer Affairs or the Federal Housing Authority, that does not have an impact on our business. At least five of the President's new energy proposals will directly alter how we are currently doing business. And, finally, there is virtually not a committee of Congress that does not directly or indirectly pass legislation which affects us.'"

So it goes. And it will keep going long after Jimmy Carter is gone. I wish Haynes Johnson had forgotten about the interloper from Georgia and written a book called *In The Presence of Washington.* ■

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  by Professor Steven H. Chaffee and Professor Jack Dennis, both of the University of Wisconsin, Madison
- **"The Case for Permanent Debates"**
  by Jim Karayn, director of the 1976 presidential debates for the League of Women Voters
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political book notes

Public Affairs books to be published in February

Against the Current. *Isaiah Berlin. Viking ($16.95).*

Behind Closed Doors: Violence in the American Family. *Murray A. Straus, Richard J. Getles and Suzanne Steinmetz. Anchor/Doubleday ($10.95).* Jammed with charts and jargon, this book deserved better editing than it got. After thousands of interviews, the authors conclude that domestic violence is far more widespread than commonly believed, and much too widely ignored.

The Canadians. *George Woodcock. Harvard ($20).*

The Cancer Syndrome. *Ralph W. Moss. Grove ($12.50).* You probably think cancer is Public Enemy Number One. According to Moss, however, cancer has many friends in high places: in the medical establishment, still relying on orthodox treatments that rarely succeed; in the pharmaceutical industry, lobbying against unorthodox treatments (like laetrile) because the industry hasn't figured out how to make a profit on them; in big business, which won't stop belching carcinogens into the environment. Little of this is new, but Moss—who is no laetrile freak himself—has done a competent job of documenting a dismal state of affairs.

The Carter Presidency and Beyond: Power Politics in the 1980s. *Laurence H. Shoup. Ramparts ($11.95).*

Deepsea Mining. *Judith T. Kildow, ed. MIT ($17.50).* The ocean floor is covered with manganese. Industry needs manganese, right? *On with the job!* Fourteen academics, in hot pursuit of the best ways to recover the manganese before the bad guys get it, conclude after 251 pages that "the issue is uncommonly intricate and tangled, mixing problems of resource supplies and security, economic and political policy, in ways that will not be easily or quickly sorted out." Better wait for the movie.

Democracy and Distrust: A Theory of Judicial Review. *John Hart Ely. Harvard ($15).*

The European Left: Italy, France and Spain. *William E. Griffith. Lexington ($24.95).*

Fantastic Invasion: Africa in the 1980s. *Patrick Marnham. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich ($10.95).*

Fortune's Child. *Lewis Lapham. Doubleday ($14.95).*

The Fourth Man: The Definitive Account of Kim Philby. Guy Burgess, and Donald MacLean, and Who Recruited Them to Spy for Russia. *Andrew Boyle. Dial ($12.95).*

Friend and Foe in the U.S. Senate. *Ross K. Baker. Free Press ($12.50).* The author, a political scientist from Rutgers, worked on Walter Mondale's Senate staff, where he learned something of which many of his fellow academics seem totally unaware—the role of human relationships in determining legislative action. Among other things, Baker finds that complete candor is absent from even the closest of congressional friendships—because of the possibility that an unguarded personal revelation might lead to political disaster if a friend ever becomes a foe.

Germany and the United States: "A Special Relationship?". *Hans W. Gatzke. Harvard ($17.50).*

History of the Idea of Progress. *Robert Nisbet. Basic ($16.95).*

The Hot Arctic. *John Dyson. Little, Brown ($15).*

Imagining America. *Peter Conrad. Oxford ($11.95).*

The Inquisition in Hollywood: Politics in the Film Community 1930-1960. *Larry Ceplair & Stephen Englund. Anchor/Doubleday ($10.95).*

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Background Paper by MASHA SINNREICH
Foreword by M. J. ROSSANT

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272 Pages Available $20.00

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Levin's Laws: Winning without Intimidation. *Edward Levin. M. Evans ($8.95).* The kind of book to keep in your medicine chest as an antidote to Robert Ringer. The author is a mediator-arbitrator who seems to have been keeping copious notes on confrontations he has settled. His "laws" are not new; essentially, he reviews the tactics practiced routinely by any professional negotiator (the art of compromise, how to recognize a bluff) and applies them to everyday situations. This is notable only because it's so unfashionable when nearly every how-to author recommends going straight for the jugular.

The Man Who Lost the War. *W. T. Tyler. Dial ($10.95).*

Marxism: For and Against. *Robert L. Heilbroner. Norton ($9.95).* In a study designed, not so much for scholars as for what the book jacket calls "the large audience that has come to look on [him] as a familiar and respected mentor," Heilbroner conducts a guided tour of Marxist canons, pausing periodically to pass judgment, pro and con, "for and against." Some of what he has to say seems truly fatuous—Jerry Brown has a more down-to-earth understanding of the idea of "dialectics," for example, which Heilbroner values because it "taps levels of awareness that defy the syntax of common sense and logic."

Readers who struggle on past that sentence will find that the rest of the book fails to live up to its promise—the arguments are quite sensible and logical, even if Heilbroner repeatedly resorts to rhetorical ambiguities when he's in a jam. (The idea that technology is responsible for shaping our working lives, for example, is never dispatched or endorsed, although Heilbroner refers often to "high speed technology" and workers dancing to the "rhythms of the machine.") But then "ambiguity," as he puts it, "is the very essence of dialectics."

Faithful to his role as the "familiar and respected" guide, Heilbroner sticks closely to the traditional furrows of Marxist thought. He worries the classical worries—about Marx's labor theory of value, his law of the declining rate of profit, his prediction of increasing immiseration for the working class. And Heilbroner comes up with the traditional answers: those concepts are not all that helpful in studying the systems we have today. Instead, the pressing questions concern the nature of work, the ways the populace can control the state, and most important, what would a society that we preferred to the one we have now *look like*? But by the time he gets around to asking these questions, time is running out, and Heilbroner ends his guided tour without even a suggestion of how to answer them.

—Robert M. Kaus

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Edited by AEI Resident Fellow Michael J. Malbin, the 384 page report is the result of a two-day conference sponsored by the American Enterprise Institute in September, 1979. Participants spanned the political and academic waterfront, including representatives of organizations committed to campaign reform (Common Cause and the Democratic Study Group), academic skeptics and friends, representatives of the federal election commission, political professionals from both major parties, leading political journalists, and a wide-ranging group of political action committee representatives.

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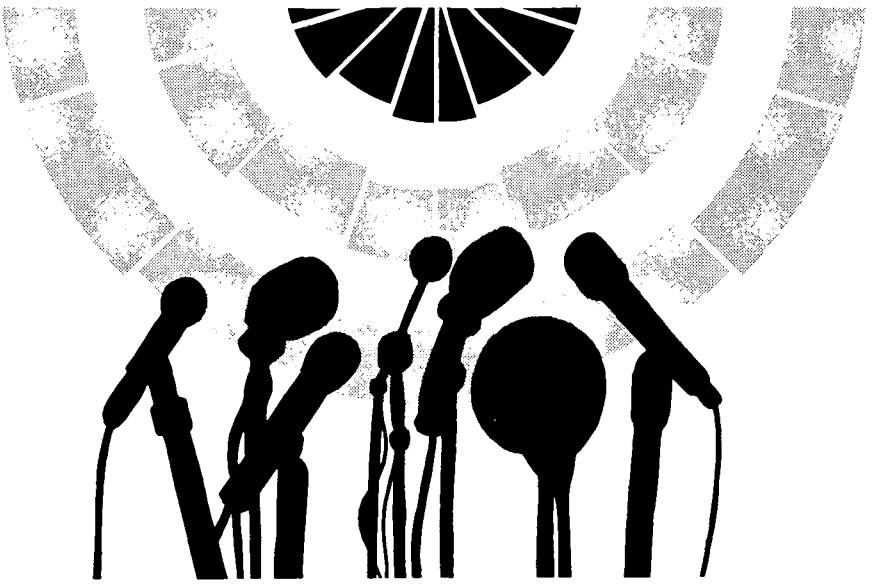

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Moscow Diary. *Veljko Micunovic, translated by David Floyd. Doubleday ($15.95).*

Nancy. *Nancy Reagan with Bill Libby. Morrow ($9.95).* Nancy loves Ronald. Ronald loves Nancy. Bill Libby has a tape recorder. Nancy talks. Bill types. Morrow publishes.

Networking: The Great New Way for Women to Get Ahead. *Mary Scott Welch. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich ($9.95).*

Not Working: An Oral History of the Unemployed. *Harry Maurer. Holt, Rinehart and Winston ($12.95).*

Office Politics: Seizing Power, Wielding Clout. *Marilyn Moats Kennedy. Follett ($10.95).* This book was not strictly necessary. Having observed men in the act of making themselves miserable at work, the author tells women how to do the same. Don't get too friendly with your co-workers until you know which clique they're in. Cultivate a mentor. When there's a merger, know all the stats on the new players before they arrive. Billed as "a manual of political survival in the business world," *Office Politics* is a depressing testimonial to the marketability of coldbloodedness.

One Nation Divisible: Class, Race and Ethnicity in the United States Since 1938. *Richard Polenberg. Viking ($12.95).*

The Papacy in Transition. *Patrick Granfield. Doubleday ($10.95).*

Property Tax Relief. *Steven David Gold. Lexington ($29.95).*

Public Enemies: The Mayor, The Mob, and The Crime That Was. *George Walsh. Norton ($12.95).*

Sex in History. *Reay Tannahill. Stein and Day ($19.95).*

States of Desire: Travels in Gay America. *Edmund White. Dutton ($12.50).*

Strategic Implications of the All-Volunteer Force. *Kenneth J. Coffey. University of North Carolina ($15).*

Walking the Tightrope: The Private Confessions of a Public Relations Man. *Henry C. Rogers. Morrow ($10.95).* Mixed in among the gossip notes are the requisite weighty thoughts about the Significance of Public Relations in a Free Society. The flack walks a "tightrope," Rogers says, between his promotional instincts and his moral scruples. If you're a public-relations man and find this plausible, don't work without a net.

West German Foreign Policy: 1949-1979. *Wolfram F. Hanrieder. Westview ($22.50).*

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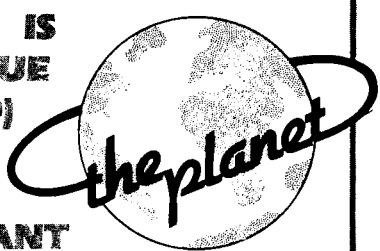

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Myth:

Trucks move most efficiently on public highway

Fact:

Railroads move truck
up to four times more

Mile for mile and pound f
railroads are up to four ti
than big trucks. Shippers
That's why piggybacking
tainers is the fastest-grow
freight business.

But there's another co
wage-earner and manufa
sidizes our public highwa
destroying that vital syst

Congress' watchdog, the
Office, said in a blisterin
sive truck weight is a ma
age. The rate of highway
down if excessively hea
highways... A five-axle t
current 80,000 pound fe
the same impact on an
least 9,600 automobiles

It is ironic that the A
ing the destruc
unnecessary, because
already exists. This is the
network that links every p
ern freight railroads.

Railroads handle mor
the nation's inter-city freig
to handle even more. Tod
repair costs and dwindlin
America's freight railroad

For more information, write:
Association of American Railro
Railroads Building, Washingto

Surprise:

America's freight railroad
carried more than 3,000,000
piggyback truckloads last yea
Trucks have left a pothole

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